



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

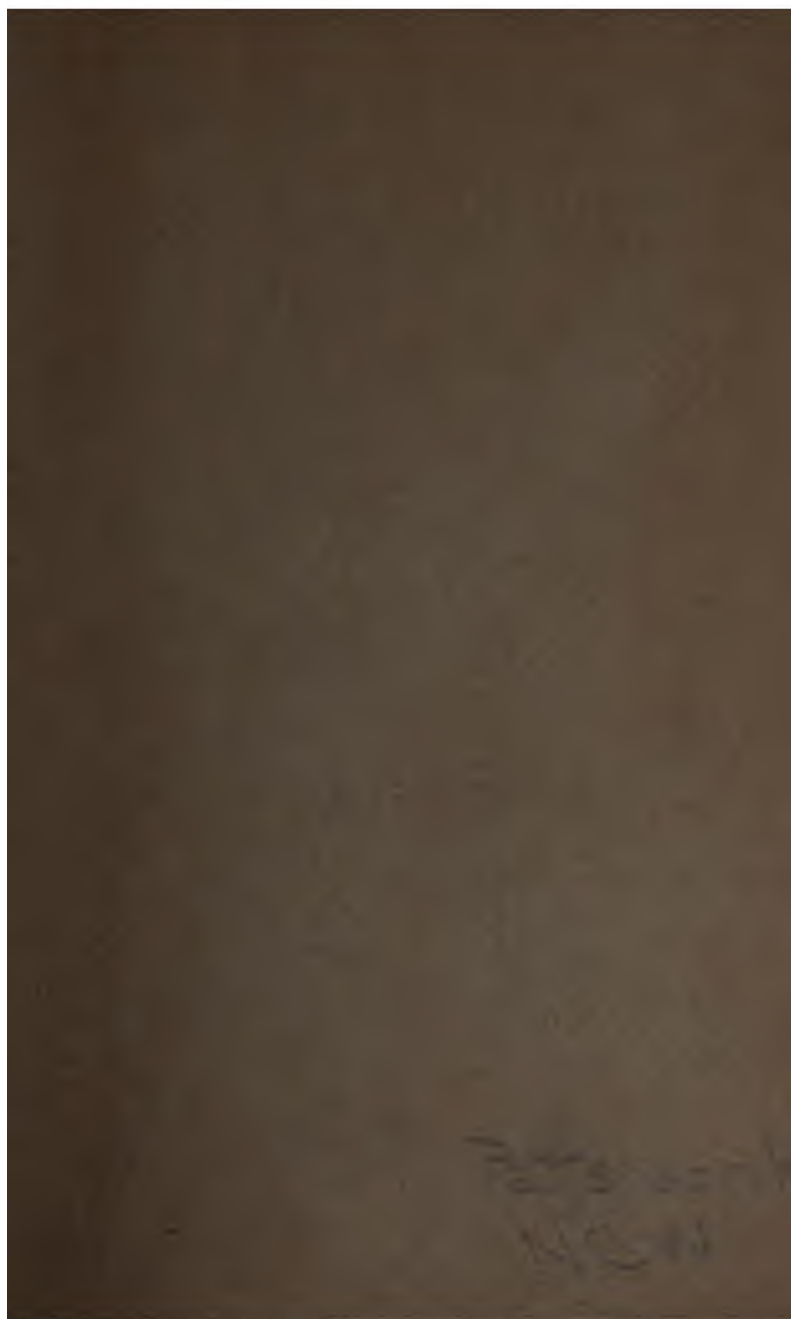
We also ask that you:

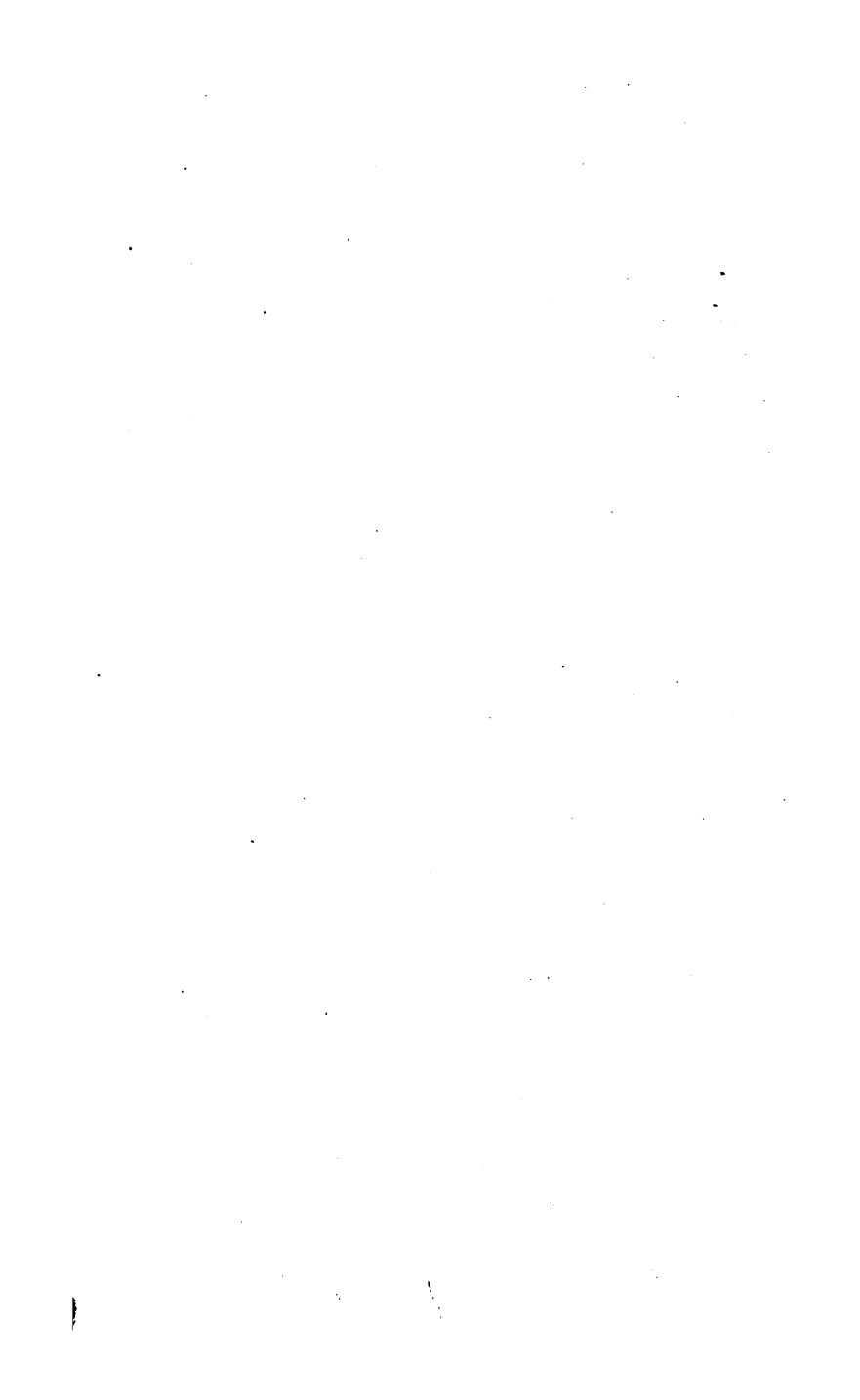
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

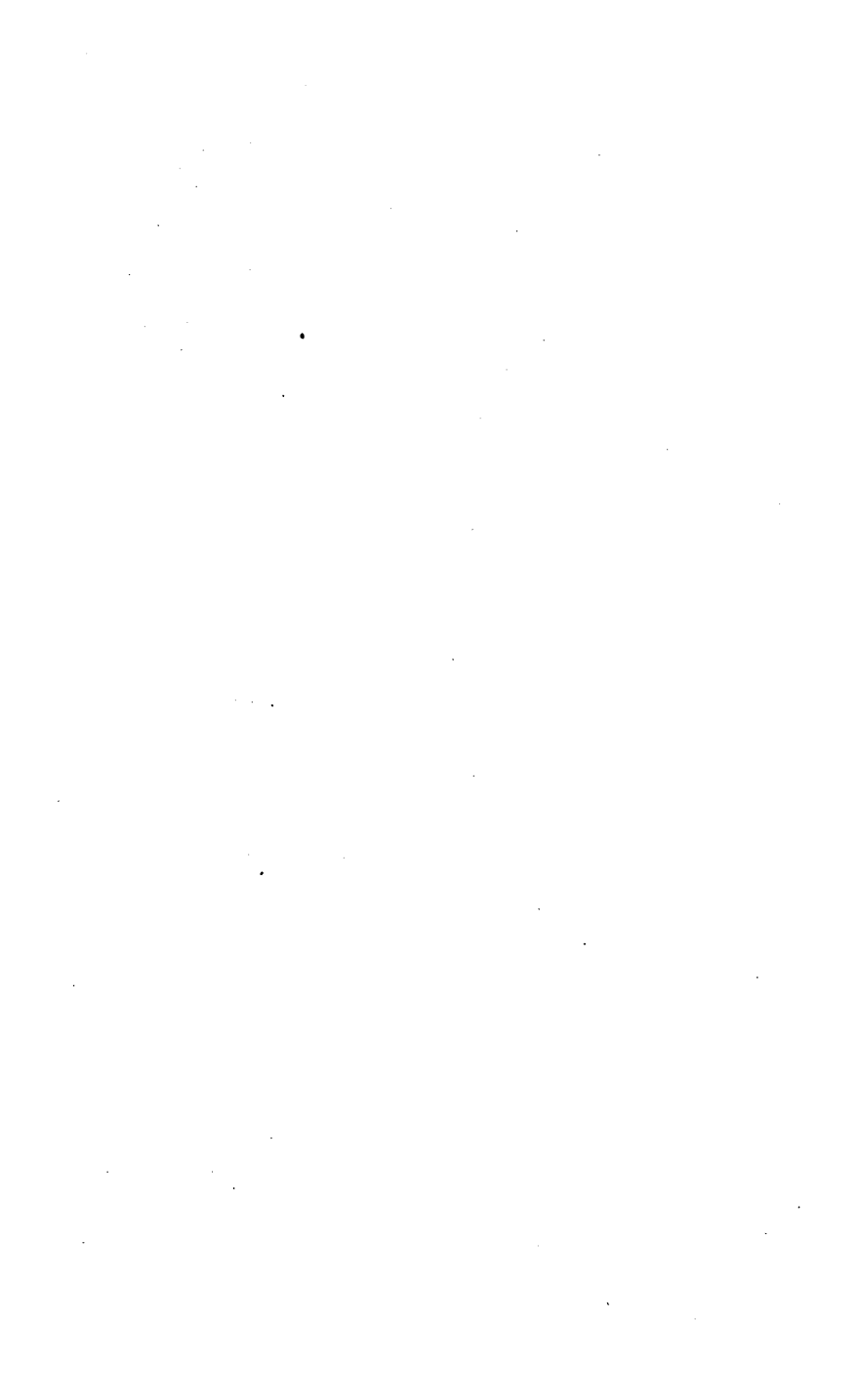
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>









IN PICCADILLY



IN PICCADILLY

BY

BENJAMIN SWIFT

AUTHOR OF "THE GAME OF LOVE," "THE TORMENTOR," ETC.

William Dendane Putnam



NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

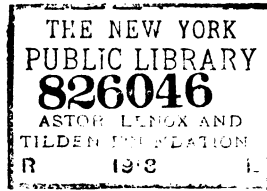
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

The Knickerbocker Press

1903

7500



COPYRIGHT, 1903

BY

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Published, February, 1903

ROY WYN
CLUB
YACHT

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE SORCERY OF LONDON	I
II. NINIAN, HENRIETTE, AND DALBIAC . . .	33
III. BARGARRAN'S RETURN	67
IV. THE HÔTEL DE LUXE	101
V. J. C. DALBIAC	133
VI. NINIAN, DEBRISAY, AND LADY OSSINGTON .	172
VII. MOORLAND OF BARGARRAN	206





IN PICCADILLY

CHAPTER I

THE SORCERY OF LONDON

THE little blind Lazarus who stands against the walls of Devonshire House, like a horror among human riches, pulled his cap over his brow to protect his face from the June sun. Then he beat the pavement with his stick as he moved towards the corner at Stratton Street to breathe the faint wind, already corrupted, which came across Piccadilly from the Green Park. That corner was his sole *villeggiatura* throughout the torment of the London summer. Yet even there he felt the quickening essences of leaf and wood penetrating and conquering air that might

have come from the scorched Orient ; for this is true of London, that her summer is Oriental both in its atmosphere and in the slumbering and bursting of human passion.

The blind beggar guessed dimly, as in a broken kaleidoscope, the pride of life that went past him. His clothes were the colour of the brick wall behind ; but the empty tin box fastened to his jacket caught the sun, and glistened like a sorrowful "order" and decoration of the Legion of Poverty. He raised his left hand, and shook the box to discover whether some pence might have been dropped into it unheard while the traffic was at its loudest, but nothing jingled in reply. His dry lips parted while he whispered "Nothink !" and he stood agape again, listening for kind feet.

Across the Green Park rose the great campanile of St. Edward's Tower, the last monumental mockery raised to Christ's mysterious but doubtful triumph. For Lazarus is still here, the burden and mystery of human existence are not lightened, and London holds more problems than ever Galilee held.

Lord and Lady Ossington were driving down to the Park, and behind them, in his dog-cart, and with his proud groom sitting beside him, came Debrisay.

"There goes Debrisay," said Bob Gartly, who was on the pavement with young Bargarran. "The Ossingtons and Debrisay follow each other like cause and effect. Let's go to the Park, and watch them."

Young Bargarran turned, and as he passed the beggar he dropped half a crown into the money-box, and blushed.

"Look here, Ninian," said Gartly, laughing, "my dear boy, bestow your charming half-crowns on me! I find that living on capital is demoralising."

Young Bargarran smiled, and pointed down the gay descent of Piccadilly.

"Look there," he said, as another carriage went past. "That's Rickaby and Lady Blanshard. Nobody knows where Blanshard is."

"I do," said Gartly. "He's behind the railings in the Green Park there, grinning. Don't you see him?"

The heaped traffic blocked the view sud-

denly, so that Bargarran could not see, but he remarked that the season among their own set was apparently going to be gay.

"Debrisay is using his whip in such a way that it almost reaches Ossington's ear," remarked Gartly. "That 's really what he 's *driving* at."

The Ossingtons were already well down the slope before Ossington turned in his carriage, and recognised the head and the harness of Debrisay's horse. He muttered "*As usual!*" in a tone which was both extraordinarily controlled and extraordinarily embittered, and then his wife felt her heart beat faster.

"Debrisay is a fool," she said.

Ossington was frowning, and his wife, in spite of indisputable beauty and lace frock and exquisite toque, and the fact that she had been married only four months, was not the happiest woman in Piccadilly that afternoon. She should have married Debrisay, to whom she had been engaged two years. Now she feared him as we fear those who have gone out of our life, and taken all its secrets with them. Yet it was her own fault. In vulgar language, she

had played the jilt, and now Debrisay's revenge was terrible ; it was unique. Whether it was the title that had allured her, or a really deeper passion for Ossington ; whether it was Debrisay's own rather explosive personality and a certain dark fact in his family's history that had at last frightened her and driven her from him, mattered nothing now to Debrisay. He was raging, not with the cause, but with the effect, and was dragging about with him his great, mutilated, murmuring love. A mass of withered leaves, withered ribbons, withered roses, a mass of blazing jewels that never know any withering, and a disastrous mass of love-letters, which wither sooner than anything else in this world, were all lying at the bottom of a leather kit-bag in Debrisay's room in the Hôtel de Luxe. Debrisay opened and examined that bag so often that his valet, D. P. Slocock, said to Ossington's valet, Laroche, that Debrisay was going mad on a portmanteau.

At any rate, Debrisay followed the Ossingtons even more persistently than Laroche. Their honeymoon across Europe had been a horror, because in almost every city, in every

hotel, they found Debrisay. Not once nor twice in a railway-station at Berlin or Berne or Vienna they had both started back from a carriage in which they discovered him sitting. Now they were back in London, and here was Debrisay at their heels again.

In the first brief delirium of marriage Ossington hardly perceived the mysterious situation which Debrisay was steadily creating. But once he did venture to ask his wife why her old lover should be the insolent spectator of their honeymoon. Lady Ossington laughed, because at that stage it seemed only very humorous that Debrisay should be playing the spy on their happiness.

Ossington suspected that his English valet was disclosing the plans of their journey to D. P. Slocock, Debrisay's man. He dismissed the valet, therefore, and engaged the apparently honest and alert young Frenchman, Laroche. But there was no escape from Debrisay, who seemed to be more than ever in the secret of their movements. The time seemed to have come when it was necessary to seek protection from this new and mysterious form of assault

"But," as Ossington said to his wife, "you can't prevent a man going to any hotel he pleases."

And Lady Ossington agreed that, after all, it was Debrisay who was covering himself with ridicule.

Ossington had no house in town, and meantime refrained from choosing one. But he had taken a suite of rooms in the Hôtel de Luxe, the glory of Piccadilly, the hotel in which half the beauty of the modern world and the insolence and blasphemy of its riches accumulate. Surely at last they were at peace, because it was not to be supposed that Debrisay would leave his house in Park Lane. But one morning Lady Ossington looked out of a window, and saw D. P. Slocock, together with the proud groom, driving up to the hotel door in the dog-cart with some of Debrisay's bags.

"Keep calm!" said Ossington, with excitement. "I wish I could be calm myself. Beatrice, why are you crying? What does his damned dog-cart matter to us?"

Debrisay arrived in the afternoon, and Sleipner, the famous manager, gave him a

handsome suite which, to the consternation of the Ossingtons, abutted on their own. The extreme rooms of both suites were divided only by a door.

"What does he mean?" exclaimed Ossington, looking at his wife in an utterly new manner.

"Get him out of this," said Beatrice. "It is disgraceful of him."

"We shall only make ourselves ludicrous if we complain," replied Ossington. "Tell me, Beatrice, is it possible that one single thread of sentiment attaches him to you?"

"No," she said firmly; "I hate him for this!"

Ossington said that was all right, and he took his wife in his arms, kissed her, and often repeated that she must not allow such a silly thing to disturb her.

"You will never speak to him, Beatrice?"

"I! I'll never *look* at him," said Beatrice.

There is one great mystery of human love unrevealed to the literary jerry-builders who talk round and round the human soul without having been in the thick of the soul's throes; and this mystery is that as long as a man really

loves a woman, any other woman is physically meaningless and even repulsive to him. This compulsion of steadfastness is a factor unknown to cynics; but it was known to Debrisay. Therefore it was with something like anguish that he sat down to watch Ossington in a sort of poor proxy and caricature attempting to ape a love that was deeper than any love burning in London that June.

"Don't say to *me*," broke out Debrisay once to Bob Gartly, who with young Bargarran had come to the Hôtel de Luxe to see what was happening,—“don't say to *me* that it was the title that led her away from me — the jot and tittle of his rank.”

“It was the tittle-tattle,” said Gartly, “the gossip, you know, which made you out to be—well, just as hot as you do seem to be, Debrisay. She got frightened. She is so fragile you would consume her.”

And then, in order to conciliate him a little, Gartly added that after all perhaps it was necessary only to *wait*.

“To wait!” cried Debrisay, rising. “To wait for what?”

"Precisely," asked Gartly. "What, then, *are* you waiting for?"

Debrisay shrugged his huge shoulders and stared as if the question had suddenly suggested itself for the first time.

"Every one is laughing at you — every one. But, of course, it is not my business," added Gartly, and walked out.

"Ninian," said Debrisay, "you 're only a boy and you 're devilish handsome. . . . You know enough to see that that man has only the passion of a marionette."

"He's long-legged for a marionette," replied Ninian.

"Have you seen her, Ninian? She likes you. . . . Does she ever speak about me?"

"No, Arthur, never," said Ninian.

"Never speaks about me?"

It was not until the afternoon in the Park that Debrisay saw Ninian again. The Park was gay, as the tide of light set westward across glimmering trees and towers and the black roofs of London. Young Bargarran and Bob Gartly were standing near the Achilles statue when the Ossingtons, followed by Debrisay,

drove past. "Nemesis in the shape of a man!" said Gartly. The ring was full of carriages, and the crowd gazed with envy or contempt or menial satisfaction as one gilded mediocrity after another went past with high and opprobrious looks. But above the jingle of bridles and the rhythm of horses' feet an attentive ear would have heard the roar of London, like the bass note of human labour; and an eye alive to the strange contrasts in this world's affairs would have noted St. George's Hospital, with its black, ugly walls dimly symbolising their function as an ultimate refuge, a kind of hostelry of pain set in the middle of the parade of vanity.

There is no other city in which the confusion of the caravansary of human life is set down in such an ironical jumble of juxtaposition. Outside the black walls of the hospital goes on the dance of life—the dance of moths in the sun—and within them the last rickety dance towards stillness and annihilation. The gilded crowd in the Park, where manners and millinery and mockery are all exquisite, are the essential type to be found in any great capital in which human

pride and insolence congregate. This is the type that saw the decline of Rome through the fumes of their banquets, and led fashion in Babylon, and held junkets in Nineveh, and brought Gomorrah to ruins, and are sapping the life of England to-day; a kind of everlasting parasites behind whom lie the blood and plunder of empires, who escape labour and live for beauty, and are the first signal of decay and dilapidation.

The Park, lying like a mirage in the midst of London, seems to belong to *them*, and to be at that time of day a garden of sorceries, a scented garden, rendezvous, and parade of golden youth in search of the brief mania of love, or possessed by the desire to see the world and to be seen by it.

Lady Ossington was certainly the most beautiful of all the women, and, as Debrisay thought, the most cruel. But it was strange that for the first time she began to feel the fatigue of leisure and the vast ennui of beauty. Doubtless for those who were in the secret, it was amusing to watch the persistence of Debrisay, but it was not amusing for the three

involved. Lady Ossington felt that the situation was becoming less humorous and more earnest. Ossington sat restlessly beside her in a bad temper, and kept muttering : " This shall cease ; that 's all ! I 'll make sure of *that* ! " She knew that *she* was now being involved in his resentment.

Once Debrisay drove past and got ahead of them, but while he was still parallel a quaint and curious incident took place. Lady Ossington's Irish terrier Tim was sitting opposite his mistress. Tim had known Debrisay, and had always displayed great affection for him. The dog, therefore, began to sniff, and then suddenly recognised Debrisay, pawed, whined, and made an effort to get near him. But Debrisay was already in front, and Tim settled down again discontentedly.

This little incident impressed Beatrice in spite of herself. She noticed Debrisay's dark hair, which she had often curled in her fingers. She used to tell him that his head was the first thing that had attracted her to him. He had driven past superbly, and many people had remarked him. Ossington seemed a

Liliputian in comparison. He turned and looked at his wife.

"We had better go back," she said.

"Yes," replied Ossington, and gave the order to drive to the Hôtel de Luxe. When Debrisay came round again they were gone. But Gartly and young Bargarran were still at the Achilles statue when Debrisay drew up.

"Driven them off the field this time," said Gartly.

Debrisay asked Ninian to join him, but did not extend the invitation to Gartly, who nodded to Ninian, and sauntered off.

"Yes," said Ninian; "it's getting late. If you'll drive me to our place, and take tea?"

Debrisay made room for him, and the groom left the horse's head and jumped up behind.

"Five million human beings are struggling every day in London towards leisure, and the result is this string of carriages an afternoon," said Debrisay. "How are you, my boy?"

Ninian said he was all right, and that he was going to the Ossingtons' dance at the Hôtel de Luxe, and that Lady Ossington had told him to come in his kilts.

"I know, I know," said Debrisay, as he stopped at Bargarran House.

"Come to tea," said Ninian, and they both jumped down and entered Ninian's father's house in Piccadilly. J. C. Dalbiac, the valet, brought tea.

The old Laird of Bargarran was already repenting that he had allowed himself to be cajoled south by his handsome and rather headstrong son. But the wild Northern home did not altogether satisfy the essentially modern instincts of Ninian, who had been educated in France, had already seen something of the world, and longed to see more of it. His mother had come from an ancient Breton stock of Huguenots, and it was she who had decided that Ninian should learn the language and the manners of France.

After anxious inquiries, the old Laird had chosen the sober provincial town of Rouen as a fit and proper place for the education of his son, never supposing that Ninian would find occasion to visit the improper Paris. Such visits had been stolen, however, and they were unforgettable. Ninian had frequented all the

theatres, and had had a flirtation with a certain *danseuse*, whom he described as his own particular *ange terrestre*. The lady, however, brought the affair to an abrupt termination for a reason unexplained, and the only result was that Ninian was loser to the amount of some five hundred francs; whereas the *danseuse*, who told him he had been guilty of a *mauvais pas*, was not even the loser by a single kiss.

When at last the youth returned home three years after his mother's death, he found his father a broken and lonely old man. Bargarran had married late, so that a great tract of years separated him from his son. Ninian was companionless, and the great moorland of Bargarran and the gaunt house, which had faced for generations storm after northern storm, seemed overwhelmingly sorrowful. Ninian hated the long, bare lobbies and the cold rooms. He had seen the sun in France, and now sunless things were intolerable to him. Oxford was mentioned, but the Laird dismissed the idea. He offered Edinburgh, but Ninian shrugged his shoulders like a dis-

dainful Breton. Then, with some enthusiasm, the boy suggested the University of Paris. But Bargarran shrugged *his* shoulders, and remarked that it would be all "Paris" and no "university." The problem was solved by not being solved at all. Ninian remained at home and became the best shot on his father's moors. But he was far from happy. If his mother had been alive, or if he had had a sister, perhaps he would have found it easier to live with Bargarran.

At the bottom of his heart the old man had a strong love for his sole child, but he had nothing like indulgence for him. On the contrary, Ninian was expected to lead only a simple and unpretentious life among old-fashioned Highland gentry and tenantry. It was supposed that he would learn at length to love those wild lands as all the Bargarrans who were sleeping under the old kirk had loved them. Dunross was their name — Dunross of Bargarran; and it was a great name. Chieftainship upon chieftainship lay behind them. Ninian was heir to many thousands of acres of valuable moorland shooting, and some good

farms down in the glen where the Garran runs, and to the granite-built ancestral house of Bargarran.

The mother's Breton blood was now running in the veins of a Dunross, but both bloods were Celtic; and certainly in his desire to wander, in his sense of a horizon existing beyond the horizon he knew, Ninian displayed a fundamental trait of every Celt. Yet it was this restlessness which made Bargarran anxious about the boy's future. He seemed to detect in Ninian too much fiery blood of Brittany. It was not that the boy's level of culture was really higher than his father's. Old Bargarran had travelled far in his day. He, too, had been educated in France, and had actually lost the broad accent of his forefathers. As he grew older, however, the traces of his ancestry became more marked. At any rate, he grew sterner, and Ninian noticed an increasing reserve and intolerance. A young, lively fellow could sit only with difficulty day after day in the company of a taciturn old man.

Ninian once ventured to suggest a project

dear to his heart; namely, that his father should rent a house every year for the London season. Since the proposal had not been utterly annihilated, he repeated it with caution. And no human being has ever been so happy as Ninian was on the day when his project seemed actually to be near realisation.

Bargarran had long been watching his son and thinking in secret about him. He remembered that he had promised his wife that Ninian would be allowed to spend some time in London every year. That promise had not yet been fulfilled, and the old man had begun to fear that, if too long thwarted in the desire to get into the thick of life, the boy might run off some fine morning, and probably disgrace the Bargarran name. Besides, a certain pardonable vanity connected with this name began to appear curiously late in the Laird's rather strange and inscrutable character. He asked himself if the name of Dunross were not perishing in obscurity. Might not Ninian become a great man? "The Bargarran," as he was called in conformity with ancient clan custom, knew that it was a name superior to

the name of any new peer, new baronet, or new knight. The glory of an old romantic past was in the name.

Thus various small causes, gravitating towards a final effect, were working in the direction of Ninian's freedom. It was partly shrewdness, partly, although unconsciously, a desire in his own behalf to mitigate the huge ennui of old age, and partly a sense of justice struggling in the old Northern heart which at length made him yield. Ninian, besides, was on the verge of manhood, and about to enter into possession of a small fortune which his mother had bequeathed to him. The old Laird decided to superintend the spending of it. When the news came at last, Ninian was cautious enough to restrain his unlimited delight. But he ran down to the old barns and outhouses, and surprised his father's Highland folk by commanding them to drink to the great future. And one dark night he, together with the shepherds, ploughmen, grooms, gamekeepers, and gillies, went to a safe place far from the house and lit a bonfire in celebration of his departure. The astonished gillies

wondered what other means would be left them to celebrate his return.

Whenever Bargarran closed his fist he closed it firmly, but when his generosity was really roused it became almost regal. Once engaged in any enterprise, he went through it handsomely, and months of stinginess might be followed by actual lavishness. As an apology for the few sudden outbreaks of extravagance of which he had been guilty, he used to repeat the old proverb, "It's all one being hanged for an old sheep or a lamb."

Thus, when he went to London, it was in the best residential quarters that he began his search, and one property after another had been rejected before the Piccadilly mansion, in which Ninian and Debrisay were taking tea that afternoon, was chosen as worthy to be called Bargarran House. He took a fourteen-years' lease, and paid a high premium, not without a pinch and certain secret retrenchments and secret loans all unknown to Ninian. Perhaps no one but himself knew how much old Highland magnificence was in this concession to his son. A quantity of oak furniture

was sent from the Northern home five hundred miles away, together with many old portraits of forgotten Bargarrans ; quaint, high-backed chairs without stuffing of any sort ; pieces of faded tapestry and Breton lace ; hundreds of old dusty books ; two huge eight-day clocks ; and numerous crystal ornaments, as stiff and as cold as the Puritans who made them. All these things were turned out of their dust, as out of graves, into the glare of the modern world, and sent packing to London.

But the old man was not long in this new house of Bargarran before certain misgivings began to trouble him. For instance, his expenses threatened to become heavier than he had anticipated. Ninian, too, intoxicated by a liberty which had been so long withheld, was rapidly developing the habits of a spendthrift, and was doing unheard-of things. He was hardly installed before he gave dinners and dances to his friends, who were multiplying around him with extraordinary rapidity. His father was unacquainted with the names of even half of them, and those he did know were not welcome in his ears.

He felt indignant, for instance, when a woman like Lady Blanshard, whose *liaison* with Rickaby was notorious, appeared in his house. He disliked Ossington and Bob Gartly, and, indeed, of all Ninian's friends it was only for Debrisay that he had anything even approaching tolerance. Worst of all, the ambiguous nature of Piccadilly, especially at night, began to perturb the Laird. When he looked out of his windows a strange sight—the amazement of Europe—met his eye.

One night he was on his way to his club, which was in Pall Mall, and he had already walked a few paces from his own doorstep. The night was chilly, and he wore his Highland cloak and a soft felt hat. His keen profile and white hair made a striking and venerable impression when seen suddenly in the glare of the electric lamps. A young woman, gaily dressed, accosted him in the accents of the lupanar. Bargarran lifted his stick in a burst of sudden anger and indignation, whereupon the girl rushed screaming across the street, and took refuge in the Green Park, since the gates were still open. A crowd collected, and

Bargarran, to the visible amusement of the spectators, ordered a policeman to search the Green Park. He then went up towards St. James's Street, but encountered so much more of the hieroglyphics of Astarte that he turned back in horror to his own house to look for Ninian, and determined to spend the night with the boy. J. C. Dalbiac, the valet, however, informed the Laird that Mr. Ninian had gone out. To make sure Bargarran called through the house "Ninian! Ninian!" but called in vain. He went out again, and searched up and down Piccadilly with his old brain in a turmoil, but handsome Ninian was luckily nowhere to be seen.

The old man sat up in his library all night with blazing eyes, into which now and again hot tears stole. His imagination was of the sort that always expects the worst. The woman who had accosted him might be accosting Ninian!

Midnight and 1 A.M. were already gone, and the old eight-day clock that had never seen a Bargarran up so late burst out as if in a fit of hysterics with *two o'clock* when Ninian's feet were at the door.

The old man waited for the turning of the latchkey and the soft closing of the door, and then in a loud, terrible voice, which made Ninian reel, summoned him.

This manner of receiving him—the torrent of reproach, the menacing gesture, the cloud of contempt, fury, and horror that suddenly burst upon him—made Ninian unconsciously clench his fists. Exasperated by what appeared to be the signal of revolt and guilt, Bargarran attempted to seize his son, but the boy was too nimble, and with an indignant “What do you *mean*, Father?” sprang from him.

“I mean,” exclaimed the old man, who was trembling—“I mean—mean—where—Where have you been?”

The mere fact that his father suspected him caused Ninian to remain obstinate. He had no guarantee that he would be believed, even although he spoke the truth, and he was too proud to suffer his father to suppose that he spoke the truth only out of fear of the consequences of telling a lie. As a matter of fact, he had been spending the night playing bridge

with Bob Gartly. But the more his father demanded the explanation, the more Ninian determined to refuse to give it.

"In the state of mind in which you are, Father," he said, "it is not probable that you will believe me in any case. Therefore, I will say nothing."

He then left the room.

Bargarran came hurriedly after him, demanding obedience ; but the only reply he received was the slam of Ninian's bedroom door.

Such incidents rankled in Ninian's heart, and he was too proud to disclose them to any stranger. He knew instinctively that it was not Bob Gartly, for instance, whom he should choose as a confidant, because Gartly was that worst of human beings, a male gossip. Ninian, however, was becoming more attached to Debrisay, whom he had first met in the shooting-lodge of his cousin Lanark of Loch Sloy. And Debrisay, although ten years older, found himself drawn into friendship with the boy, who, in spite of troops of flatterers, seemed ~~to~~ be very lonely in London. Debrisay was ~~the~~ the means of Ninian's election in one of the

most exclusive clubs, and altogether a prospect of real intimacy seemed to be suggesting itself to each of them. Debrisay began to come frequently to Bargarran House.

"The old furniture is charming," said Debrisay, as Ninian poured out the tea, "and your silver, too. I suppose all this is part of the old homestead?"

"Yes. These antiquities came squeaking and creaking hundreds of miles, as if protesting against eviction, and some of them went to pieces on the way. That was the first thing to make my father angry and to rouse his absurd superstition. He thinks he has made a mistake, and that our name and fame must now tumble in bits, because at the journey's end the portrait of a venerable aunt was found with a hole in the cheek," replied Ninian, laughing.

"Ninian," continued Debrisay, "The Bargarran is probably right. London, like a huge magnet, draws us all towards her, but she wastes us and wears us out."

Presently he was silent, and seemed absorbed in other thoughts. Ninian noticed his extraordinarily thin lips and the fine slumbering

eyes. "Ho, ho!" thought Ninian, "he's off on his old track!" And in a moment it became apparent that this conjecture was not wrong.

"Never let a woman get hold of your life as Beatrice has hold of mine — you know it was all so sudden — Great heavens, so frightfully sudden! It makes me laugh," said Debrisay, laughing bitterly.

"You are worrying yourself about what can't be helped now," said Ninian.

"You see, I could n't go on living in my own house — it is all prepared for *her*. I made a lovely boudoir — really quite beautiful; but I shut the whole place up."

"You like the Hôtel de Luxe?"

"It's really my *hôtel de misère*," replied Debrisay. "Otherwise, it's amusing."

"Arthur," said Ninian, "I've got to dine with them. I must dress."

Debrisay said:

"Very well; come up to my rooms when you're tired of dancing."

Ninian promised to come, and Debrisay left him.

It was about five hours afterwards, close on

midnight, that Ninian, flushed with dancing, stole up to Debrisay's rooms in the Hôtel de Luxe. The big, silent man had heard the band playing, and had been thinking all these hours: "This is the dance she should have given in my house." He was reading Sir Charles Dartnell's *Dooms of Love* when Ninian, in his full-dress kilt, came in. Certainly young Bargarran was extraordinarily handsome, and at that moment he was supremely happy. All the women had remarked him.

"You are gorgeous," said Debrisay, taking hold of the sporran as Ninian sat down beside him—"gorgeous! Let 's see the dirk and your buckles. How do you manage to keep your knees so white?"

"By washing," said Ninian, laughing. "Look here, old chap! this dirk was at Bannockburn."

He pulled out the little jewel-handled poniard and showed it to Debrisay, who said it was just the size for the heart of a woman who had betrayed a man. Ninian started, and looked at him. The electric lamp was shining full on Debrisay's lips, which were firmly and rather

fiercely closed, and all at once a horrible suggestion of the possible meaning of Debrisay's presence in the Hôtel de Luxe came into the boy's mind.

"Arthur!"

"All right, my boy," said Debrisay, gripping his bare knee. "I only mean that real love—love that overwhelms a man—is far nearer crime than miserable eunuchs suppose. You have been dancing with her?"

"Yes. How do you know?" asked Ninian.

"She throws spells over people. Besides, I feel her perfume on you—Roger et Gallet's *Peau d'Espagne*. She never uses any other perfume. She's been close to you. Good God! you've been holding her close, Ninian," said Debrisay, while his hand tightened on the boy's knee.

"Of course," said Ninian, laughing—"a waltz."

"That perfume makes me drunk. Give me your hand—no, no—the right one. This hand has been round her waist," said Debrisay.

"Arthur, what on earth have you been drinking to-night?" asked Ninian.

Debrisay asked in return who all were there.

"Count d'Avoncourt, Lady Blanshard, and of course, Rickaby, Bob, Lady Teesdale, Lady Ankersmith, my cousins, and heaps more. I can't be bothered remembering. I must be going. By the way, Count Stefani's there, and De la Downe. She talked about *you*."

"Who?"

"Beatrice, of course. She's a ripper. She whispered to me, 'How's the wolf upstairs?' Every one's amused because they all know you're in the hotel. I overheard Lady Blanshard say to Stefani, 'Ossington is dying of the mere fatigue of suspicion.'"

"Did she? Did she?" asked Debrisay, not meaning Lady Blanshard, but reverting to what Ninian had said about Beatrice.

"I must go, Arthur. I'm to dance the next dance with her. She's looking superb."

Debrisay wanted to hold him.

"By Jove, Arthur, don't tear the clothes off me! Let me go!" urged the boy.

"I heard her dress trailing past that door," said Debrisay. "Yes, you will dance and then sleep. I never dance or sleep."

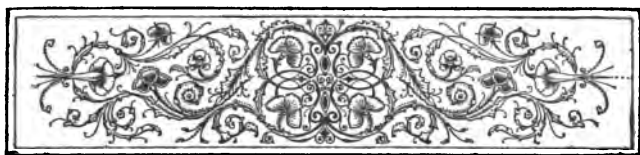
“Arthur, leave go!” cried Ninian. “She’s waiting.”

“Good night, Ninian,” said Debrisay, letting him go at last.

Debrisay waited until the band had played the last waltz, and then he heard the carriages rolling away. He listened at one of his own doors for a quarter of an hour, and at length heard the click of the lift, and then Lady Ossington’s dress trailing along the passage. Her train swept his threshold, while his heart beat faster. Urged by his desire to see her, he was on the point of turning the handle, but he suddenly mastered himself.

He walked up and down his rooms till the morning came glimmering through the shutters. Then he went to bed, whispering his perpetual question: “Beatrice, why? why?”





CHAPTER II

NINIAN, HENRIETTE, AND DALBIAC

J. C. DALBIAC was a menial with aspirations. It was a matter of irritation and surprise to him that he was a menial at all. And the fact that he was frequently ordered to pull off Ninian's riding-boots and breeches, brush old Bargarran's clothes, whistle for cabs, stand at the doors of broughams, and run for small change made him hate the name of Bargarran. He belonged to that dangerous class who reflect upon the inequalities of rank and begin to compare their own servile state with the lordly state of their masters.

To be the minister of luxury without possessing the right of sharing it, to be the source of other people's ease and yet to be only the spectator of it, is an exasperation to

a certain class of minds in whom the consciousness of social inferiority rankles and ferments.

But in Dalbiac's case one piquant circumstance aggravated his discontent. The Dalbiacs had not always been lackeys. It was worldly misfortune which had driven Jean Chrétien and his father into the ranks of menials. They were Frenchmen, and Dalbiac's grandfather had actually possessed land on the banks of the Seine. But during the Franco-Prussian War old Dalbiac had ruined himself in speculation in gunpowder and firearms, and, as a result, a host of financial troubles had overwhelmed his family. His son, for instance, was compelled to take service as *chasseur* in the house of a French nobleman, and Jean Chrétien, then about eighteen years old and too proud to remain in his own country, had come to London. After a series of disappointments, he had been at last compelled to put on livery. His English was already remarkably fluent, and his good manners and good looks made it easy for him to find and to fill with success

the position of a first-class valet. He aimed persistently at the gradual reinstatement of himself in social life.

He was now twenty-five, and remarkably handsome. He actually outshone the owners and many of the guests at Bargarran House; and he believed that, were it not for his gold buttons and red waistcoat, many a great lady might have admired him. Indeed, he was not certain whether, in spite of the crimson stripe down his trousers, he had not been already the cause of secret anguish to more than one virtuous woman in high life. Not once, nor twice, has personal beauty succeeded in breaking through the rigid lines of caste. At any rate, it was not a maid-servant, nor even a milliner's assistant, who might expect to become Dalbiac's wife. He was one of those subtle underlings who are aware that all their fortune is in their looks; and once, when he overheard a guest at Bargarran House asking, "Where did you get that handsome valet?" he was supremely happy. He knew that the world adores good looks wherever it sees them.

Thus he began to consider each situation as

only a stepping-stone to higher things. He had been in service at the Hôtel de Luxe, had caught the eye of Sleipner, and had succeeded in saving two hundred pounds in tips. Such was his grace of manner that many young men and some young women remained at the hotel only to enjoy the luxury of being served by Dalbiac. He captivated every visitor, and, by some curious imposition of his character, he seemed to compel them, for the sake of their self-respect, to bestow upon him far more than what was usual, or than what they could afford.

Dalbiac's knowledge of the world had been developed since he came to London.

"Dalbiac," said Sleipner to him one day, "I strongly advise you to go into private service. You are the sort of fellow to whom old bachelors or old maids or widows leave windfalls. Remember to tickle them with flattery as with a feather."

Dalbiac took that advice, left the Hôtel de Luxe, and many visitors inquired regretfully where he had gone. The Bargarrans were envied. But at first Dalbiac considered that he had made a mistake, and that it was out of

jealousy that Sleipner had wished to compass his ruin. The numerous tips, of course, ceased and, moreover, Bargarran House seemed preposterously dull. A visit to the cold North, where he was compelled to follow young Bargarran's gun for miles over deep heather, confirmed him in his suspicion that he was losing way in the world. Letters from his friend Laroche, Ossington's valet, made him long to hurry back to the Hôtel de Luxe. Laroche described the Ossingtons' arrival, and then the arrival of Debrisay, in such a way as made Dalbiac feel that his real post was in a centre of luxury and scandal. He pined in a kind of homesickness for his old *étage*, and would have paid a premium to serve Debrisay or to be able to plot for the disgrace and removal of D. P. Slocock.

Gradually, however, his opinions changed. He felt that if he remained patient, and were content to watch what was passing in Bargarran House, perhaps the real chance might be found lying neglected under his eyes. He noticed a change of relationship developing, almost rapidly, between father and son, and he correctly

attributed it to the chagrins and illusions which old Bargarran was discovering in his new home in Piccadilly. To begin with, the Laird, who seemed to meet every other one with bent brows, had generally a far more docile manner towards his valet. Sometimes he was even benignant, so that the other servants began to look with suspicion and disfavour on the newcomer. An expensive valet was one of the necessary follies connected with Piccadilly. Dalbiac was quick to adapt himself to Bargarran's peculiarities. The fact that he was able to assure the Laird that he too came from a Huguenot stock helped to strengthen his position in the household. The housekeeper, Mrs. McClintock, said it was an impudent lie, but the Laird was content and made no investigations. Dalbiac was planting himself with some skill in soil which he hoped would be fertile for his future. He watched the antagonism growing between Ninian and his father. Already strange dreams disturbed the fatal man. Bargarran was on the verge of extreme old age, and Dalbiac remembered Sleipner's advice.

For instance, it pleased Bargarran one day when he found Dalbiac poring over the immense leather-bound, silver-clasped Bible which had been brought from the old Northern home and set down solemnly amid such incongruous surroundings. Dalbiac, who was only reading the long register prefixed to the Bible, and containing entries of births and deaths of Bargarrans since 1504, excused himself and apologised to his master. Bargarran, with a smile, told him that he had no need to excuse himself, and that it was a gratifying sight to find a young man looking into the Scriptures. Then, having put on his most powerful spectacles, he asked Dalbiac in which of the sacred books he had been reading. Dalbiac, who was unable to distinguish Deuteronomy from Job, hurriedly turned the leaves and lighted upon Solomon's Song. A certain momentary doubt troubled Bargarran as he wondered whether any dubious motive had impelled the youth to fix upon those particular pages above all others in Scripture. When, however, he asked Dalbiac whether he was aware that the language of the celebrated song was purely

figurative, a wonderful attempt to lead the world through sensuous to spiritual meanings, Dalbiac immediately acquiesced. Then Bargarran expounded the Scriptures for a brief quarter of an hour, patted his valet on the shoulder, and told him that he was on the right road.

Dalbiac thus took another hint. He even requested to be allowed to accompany Bargarran to chapel. That was more than Ninian had ever asked. Ninian, in fact, had asked to be allowed to stay away; and although the request was certainly not granted, Ninian stayed away with extraordinary regularity. Dalbiac observed how such a fact disturbed Bargarran's spiritual peace, and threatened to cause him to use somewhat incongruous and unspiritual language. Bargarran came near swearing at Ninian for not attending chapel, and the odd situation amused Dalbiac. But Ninian attended too many late parties on Saturday nights and too many early luncheons on Sunday mornings ever to find time for chapel during the interval.

Now, as Bargarran's suspicions and anxieties

about his son increased, his religion began to take still greater hold upon him. More than once he had compelled Ninian to get upon his knees and listen to the inventory of his own soul turned out for the inspection of Heaven. The truth was, however, that many different motives urged Bargarran in his policy as regards Ninian. To begin with, the sudden increase in his expenditure was perturbing him, and he called upon Ninian to bear a share of it out of the income his mother had bequeathed to him.

As yet, Ninian had made no response, for the excellent reason that his account was already overdrawn at his bank. Bargarran seemed to have come to London only to be the spectator of the extravagances of his son, and he repented the promise he had made to his wife.

Ninian spent his day in rising late, riding in the Park, lunching, dining, and dancing. The fact that he had a small fortune in his own control increased his father's resentment. In vain had Bargarran inquired of his lawyer whether it were possible to restrain the mis-

spending of so much money. The lawyer said plainly, "No!"

Unknown to Ninian, the old man had already been attempting to dispose of his lease, but since the market was glutted with houses to be let, the agents gave him no encouragement. And besides, it occurred to him that, even although *he* packed north, Ninian would remain as long as his money lasted. Thus, with motives curiously mixed, Bargarran looked forward with a sort of savage joy to the day when Ninian might surrender himself as a debtor and beggar. Worst of all, the Laird began to take Dalbiac into his confidence and to mention to him his anxieties about Ninian. The boy spent hour after hour among his own friends, and Bargarran found himself lunching and dining and sitting whole evenings alone. At first he murmured a few criticisms, and found Dalbiac a sympathetic listener.

"I am surprised, Laird, at Mr. Ninian," said Dalbiac as he lowered the lights and laid the port decanter before his master.

Then Bargarran began to unfold to Dalbiac plans which he withheld from Ninian. Indeed,

immersed in his own pleasures, the boy knew nothing of the insidious influence which was slowly ousting him from his father's affection. For Dalbiac behaved with extraordinary politeness and tact, and was not unwilling to receive confidences from both of them. If the chances of safety were at all sure, he winked at many of the young man's misdemeanours, received and hid letters for him, and put him to bed when some too generous wine had played tricks with his brains. Dalbiac had the patience of the manipulator. His fellow-servants began to fear him.

Ninian had remained obstinately silent after his father's first serious attack upon him. The sense of an injustice was rankling within him, and it would take long for him to forget Bargarran's terrible outburst. The knowledge that he was innocent intensified the boy's manner, which on provocation easily became scornful and haughty. In a hundred details he exhibited his contempt. And on Bargarran's part there seemed to be no intention of breaking silence until the boy's sustained reserve aggravated the situation.!

Suddenly, Bargarran demanded an apology,

but Ninian gave him one cold look and left the room. Bargarran was astounded. He felt his authority slipping from him. At first he was paralysed by contradictory emotions and a certain fear of consequences.

Three days passed without an interview. Not even the common greetings "Good morning" or "Good night" passed between them. It so happened that the fourth day was Ninian's birthday, and Bargarran remembered it. That was, perhaps, the one event in the whole year which ever saw any warmth or enthusiasm at Bargarran House. It used to be a happy day for Ninian, because his father never bestowed a mean present. If the present was invariably accompanied by a long sermon and endless admonitions, it was yet generally worth these inevitable accessories. Bargarran had been looking forward to the day—Ninian's twenty-second birthday—and he had bought a fine sporting-rifle as a gift. What to do with it was now a problem. The year that had passed since Ninian's last birthday had been clouded by misunderstandings, and now there was a cruel breach between them.

Ninian came down to breakfast, and was apparently oblivious that that day was his birthday. On the table lay waiting for him a heap of congratulatory letters — one from Debrisay, one from Lady Ossington, one from Gartly, and others from flatterers and sycophants.

His father watched him helping himself to breakfast and then slowly reading one letter after another until all had been read. The old man, unable to control his emotion, allowed the wave of it to break over him, and said in a faltering voice :

“Ninian, my — my boy, will you not allow your *father* to congratulate you, too?”

His eyes were filled with tears.

Ninian rose.

“Father — Father — dear old Father! — we’ve both been wrong,” he cried, and put his arms round the old man’s neck.

He turned to hide his own tears as he went back to his seat. Then came the long-delayed explanation.

When Bargarran heard it, he said :

“Why have you been so cruel to yourself and me, Nin?”

Ninian only smiled. The reconciliation seemed complete, and more words would only mean more wounds. Then Bargarran, much happier, brought out the gun and gave it to Ninian, who praised it as the finest he had ever seen.

An hour later the Laird announced that that day he was to leave for the North on business. It was, indeed, this fact which had made him so desirous of a reconciliation. Plans for building new cottages and for the draining of some of his fields were to be considered, and his presence on the spot had become necessary.

"I leave you, Ninian," he said, a little embarrassed because perhaps a little ashamed; "I trust you now altogether, my boy, and hope that the past is all buried."

Ninian looked at him with clear, honest eyes, and said :

"All right, Father."

But before he left for the North, Bargarran admonished the boy again, as if, after all, he was afraid to leave him in that house alone.

Ninian went to the station with him, and

asked how long he would be away. Bargarran said he would be away ten days or more.

"I don't deny I have been anxious about you, Ninian; and there are other things, too—the expense. But it's mostly *you* I've been thinking about. The pits that are prepared for young men! I abhor this place. I might as well have taken a house on the edge of the abyss!"

"No, no, Father — no!" said Ninian.

"Well, I trust you; if I did n't I would take you with me. And, Ninian, *don't waste your money*," said Bargarran, with emphasis, stepping into the train and waving adieu to his son.

That evening the boy watched the dusk falling on Piccadilly and the Green Park. The sky was red and yellow above London, which stretched itself out like a vast City of the Plain. The heat of the day was over, but that peculiar heat of London's night, a certain luxurious heaviness of slumberous air, gratified the senses. Ninian stood on the balcony and watched the June sunset shining up Piccadilly,

glimmering on the trees and blazing on brass and silver harness. The jingle of the traffic, the carriages being driven to the theatres and hotels, the perpetual movement of human forms, now and again a white face looking up from the pavement towards the roofs and the sky, the sound of life galloping, the haste of pleasure, and the slower motion of labour—all this, felt and seen in the fascination of twilight, quickened Ninian's sense of the rhythm of life in a colossal city. God oppresses us with mystery on moorland and mountain and on the sea, but nowhere is the mystery so overwhelming as when we gaze on the human mirage. Ninian felt the excitement of the mere possession of life that night. He was flushed with youth. Current and counter-current of emotions were within him. He went from the balcony, rang his bell, and told Dalbiac that he would not dine at home. He dressed himself, put on a thin black overcoat and his opera-hat, and walked towards the Hôtel de Luxe. He looked up at Debrisay's and at Lady Ossington's windows, but it was too late to send in his name. He went on and

dined alone at Prince's. Afterwards he went to a theatre, and it was therefore late before he walked down Piccadilly again to Bargarran House. At that hour the pavements were full of night-walkers, pariahs, outcasts of sex, self-destroyers, who, in spite of the modern conditions around them, might have walked the streets of old perished pagan cities.

This perpetual apparition of Baal and Astarte as the fundamental gods comes as a shock upon moralists. In spite of innumerable Christian churches, Piccadilly is as wild and thorny a path as the old witch Ashtoreth ever planned. And not the least of its startling features is the symbolism of its descent towards an hospital. In spite of electric lamps and silver moon, London was dark that night and black with sorcery. Ninian saw all the pale faces, and smiled because they smiled at him. That is the smile Solomon saw as he was "passing through the street near her corner,"—and Da Vinci painted it on the face of *Gioconda*—a gesture born in the midnight of human passion and transmitted as a kind of infernal etiquette. Ninian was only a boy,

and was amused by it. He heard the perpetual "*Chéri! Chéri!*" like the lure and decoy of night-birds.

He stopped — or, rather, he was stopped — and suddenly found himself before a pair of gleaming eyes and a mass of grotesque millinery, and felt lean and active fingers upon him, but he wriggled off. Again he was stopped by another death's-head, and again and again, until the swarm had passed him like moths dancing towards naphtha. He was now safely before his father's door, which, to his surprise, he noticed was open. Dalbiac was pushing a girl down the steps, a girl who was weeping, endeavouring to hold him, and crying :

"Tu veux me pousser dans les rues ! Eh bien, cette nuit pour la première fois je vais gagner quelque chose."

Ninian, in whose ears French always sounded sympathetically, said : "What's this ?" as he ran up to the door.

Dalbiac replied excitedly : "I'll call the police, sir."

"Stop !" said Ninian, who had been struck

by the note of agony in the girl's voice and the terrible emphasis of her words, "You are driving me on to the streets!" "Allow her to come in. Shut the door," ordered Ninian, to the surprise and horror of Dalbiac.

The girl, now sobbing with gratitude, went in and sat on a chair in the hall and covered her face. Dalbiac, who had become pallid, closed the door and stood waiting orders with excitement and curiosity. The girl did not lift her head. Ninian was able to see only the splendour of her black hair, the purity of her neck, and the poor finery of her clothes—a straw hat, loosely twisted, turned up at the front brim, and loaded with blue flowers and white lace; a thin grey frock trimmed with grey silk; white gloves, and a fan. Young Bargarran tried to make her speak, and when she persisted in sobbing, Dalbiac suddenly shouted, "Henriette!"

"You know her, then?" asked Ninian, turning on him, while the girl, apparently terrified, said:

"Monsieur, I'll go now."

Dalbiac had his hand on the door, but

Ninian shook his head, and said : " Why is she in such a state ? "

Henriette, touched by the kindness of his voice, looked up at him through dazzling tears, and murmured, "*Aimable!*"

Ninian then grasped the situation, looked at his valet, and said impetuously : " Dalbiac, you 're a coward. "

" *Police*, did you say ? "

" Oh no, monsieur ! " exclaimed Henriette, " he not coward ; he but forget a little. "

Henriette Tillinac had met Dalbiac at a dancing-school, and had fallen passionately in love with him. Two years ago she had come from Paris, and had been employed in a milliner's shop in Bond Street. She had a good reputation, was an *honnête fille*, and through no fault of hers, but owing to the sudden failure of her employer, was now without work or means of subsistence. It was the middle of the season, and there were no vacancies. Day after day she had sought a new situation, but had been turned from every door. She secured, it is true, temporary employment as a skirt and bodice hand in Con-

duit Street, but her fingers were deft only in millinery, and she was dismissed after she had turned out two unsatisfactory bodices to irate customers. She had kept Dalbiac informed about her misfortunes, but he had not listened with much sympathy. Yet she was violently in love with him, and displayed the tenacious fidelity which is so admirable a trait in young French girls. Dalbiac had been interested in her. He had walked out with her, sat with her under the trees in the Park on dark nights, held her close, kissed her, and had talked about the future. In short, he had intoxicated her. But he had scarcely returned vow for vow or heat for heat. It was precisely the moment when he was dreaming about far more important things than a little milliner ever thought about. Her naïve prattle began to bore him. No doubt her adoration had appeased his vanity, but it had not done much more for him. Her little plans for their marriage, her poor little economies, and her perpetual chatter about what she would do for him in their future home had really ceased to interest him. When she told him he was

"*beau, très beau,*" he looked as if he knew it already. He was heartless with her, and never even reminded her in return that she was "*jolie, très jolie.*" He considered it was unfortunate for her that she was an orphan, practically destitute, or dependent only on a precarious employment. He feared lest she might ask him for money. These fears were soon realised. Henriette proposed that she should go back to Paris, seek another situation, and wait patiently until she could return to him. He was not unfavourable to her departure, but he had no desire to supply her with the funds. There had been a series of petty quarrels and misunderstandings, half-developed doubts and jealousies. But Henriette had forgiven everything, and now loved him more passionately than ever. But Dalbiac suddenly discovered that he did not love Henriette, and when she asked a small loan he refused it. She looked at him expecting to see that he was only playing, that it was all fun. But she soon was made aware that J. C. Dalbiac had very little fun in him. In fact, J. C. had begun to think that Henriette

might be, after all, an adventuress anxious to secure him as a mainstay. He told her he had no money, and he told himself that his two hundred pounds in tips were going to remain snugly in the bank. It was a frightful blow for Henriette. She was humiliated in his eyes and in her own. She was at the point of despair. Yet she loved him, admitted that that was her only poor claim and plea, and she ventured at last to come to Bargarran House. It was doubtful, however, whether he would give her money, since he had ceased to give her kisses. He had said his adieux. When he opened the door that night, and found himself face to face with her, he overwhelmed her with reproaches. She was about to run into his arms to tell him that she had n't a sou and that she did not know where she was to sleep that night. It was, therefore, most fortunate for her that young Bargarran came along and prevented her being shoved farther down the steps. A few moments later, and her fate might have been far darker than it was.

But it was not from Henriette that Ninian was able to wring these details. Her cry that

she was being driven on to the streets was only her dramatic statement of her misery, and was meant to soften Dalbiac. It is far more probable that had Ninian not come to her help she would have committed suicide that night. But she said nothing against her lover. Indeed, when Ninian asked her if she had no friends to go to, no one at all in London, she replied :

“Only Jean !”

“Oh !” exclaimed Ninian, turning round on Dalbiac again. “You were going to—Dalbiac, your life would have been a horror to you ever after.”

“Sir,” said Dalbiac, with a flavour of insolence in his tone, “what would *you* do if all the women who made love to you demanded your purse as well ?”

Ninian rebuked his valet and refused to discuss such things with him. He said he did not wish to pry into Dalbiac's affairs, but that here was a very pitiable situation, and that it was impossible to drive such a penniless girl on to Piccadilly at that time of night.

“You 're not a monster, Dalbiac,” con-

tinued Ninian, excitedly, while Dalbiac watched him.

Henriette began to weep again, and murmur, "Monsieur ! monsieur !"

Ninian then asked her if she had no money. "If I gave you money," he said, "you could find a lodging. Where did you lodge last night?"

"Oh, monsieur ! I do not vish to leave Jean ; oh no, I do not vish ! Jean ! Jean !" she cried, stretching out her hands towards Dalbiac. "Oh, vot have I do ? Have I do you ill, Jean ? O Jean, I do kiss de ground under your veet !"

"She must stay here to-night," said Ninian.

A cold smile crossed Dalbiac's lips.

"I have told her I don't love her any more, sir," said Dalbiac. "I am sorry to be the cause of this scene."

"Look here," said Ninian, "you 'll both make it up in the morning. Come."

Dalbiac shook his head.

"Waken Mrs. McClintock," ordered Ninian, "and tell her to give this little girl a bed. My father would do the same if he were here."

"Sir," said Dalbiac, astounded, "this is not possible! I repudiate her—Your father——"

"My father, I say, would do as I order," continued Ninian. "There's no man rejoices more over a lost sheep—I mean, a lamb found—I'm damned if I know how the thing goes—but, at any rate, he would do just as I have done. You'll thank me later, Dalbiac!"

As Dalbiac turned to go along the passage to where the servants' stair ascends, as curious a smile as has ever contorted a human face broke over his.

"Monsieur de Bargarran," cried Henriette, "*vous êtes mon sauveur.*"

"*Bonne nuit,*" said Ninian, and walked into the library, and sat down to drink the whisky and soda prepared for him.

"By Jove," he soliloquised, "he's a bit of a brute! Such a pretty little girl! He deserves a kicking—It'll be all right to-morrow, though, and perhaps it is just as well the old governor's away!" As yet he was not really perturbed by thinking that a society which mumbles that "the greatest of these is charity" would convict him of a deplorable blunder. It

is the privilege of youth to make these glorious mistakes.

Meantime, Dalbiac was dragging Henriette up the dark stair, and pulling at her wrists in a fit of rage and jealousy. He was hardly master of all the confused emotions within him.

"*Chéri, mon cœur, tu vas me pardonner,*" she whispered, stumbling on the stair.

"*Quoi! Sacr—*" muttered Dalbiac, as he almost threw her against the housekeeper's door. A dim light was burning on the landing, and Henriette drew back terrified when she saw her lover's face.

But there were sounds of some one stirring in the room. Mrs. McClintock, in fact, had been wakened out of a profound slumber by the thud against her door, and now she heard Dalbiac calling, and as usual, mispronouncing her name. They had never been friends. Not long after his arrival she had said to him, "I dinna like ye," and perhaps she was the only inmate of the house whom he feared. A great deal of what she said was wholly unintelligible to him, but he was at least sure that every word meant hostility. Mrs. McClintock had

served The Bargarran forty-three years, and it was a matter of never-ending surprise to her that once a year she was now to be bundled out of the North and set down in Piccadilly. But the old Laird could not get on without her. Ninian was aware that she and her surroundings were utterly incongruous, but affection for an old nurse made him silent. Old Mary, indeed, loved him like a mother, and although she considered him responsible for the experiment in Piccadilly, she shielded him whenever Bargarran's wrath broke loose.

"But the gude siller, the gude siller, ye're strewin' here!" she had often said to Ninian. And her opinions of London were summed up in the statement "This is the Scarlet Woman o' the Beuk" (Bible). Many a time she had gone about the house muttering "Bargarran, Bargarran, ye're red-wud." The streets terrified her, and as yet her farthest journey west had been Knightsbridge, and she had never got farther east than Piccadilly Circus. She lived in perpetual dread of thieves, of whom she considered Dalbiac the worst. When the door opened Mrs. McClintock appeared—a

huge apparition in white. The lace of her nightcap and the ample folds of her night-dress were visible by the light of the candle she held aloft.

Henriette trembled when she heard a voice, like a man's voice, crying : " Wha 's thare ? " Dalbiac stepped forward. " *Ye ?* " exclaimed Mrs. McClintock. " Stand roun' the corner till I get mair claithes, ye shamefu' flunkie ! " Then she slammed the door, and when she opened it again, she was in a dressing-gown. " Weel ? " says she. Dalbiac hastily gave her Ninian's message.

At first she refused to believe it. " Ye 're fuddled, man ; ye 're drunk ! " But when Dalbiac pushed Henriette into the light, Mrs. McClintock staggered.

" Gude help us ! Aff the streets, d' ye say ? I winna believe it that Maister Nin gave ony sic orders. Gae wa' ye baith. P'lice ! P'lice ! Maister Nin ! "

Ninian, indeed, had heard her voice and came running up.

" It 's all right, Mary," said he ; " give this little girl a bed to-night."

"Forgie me, Maister Nin, I winna d' it," replied Mrs. McClintock. "Nae, nae. Gang to bed, ye 're gawky, laddie. Gude help us, ye 're nappy."

"Go on, Mary ; do it without talking," ordered Ninian, sternly.

"Maister Nin, Maister Nin," she exclaimed in horror. "What wad your daddie say ?"

"He 'd say what I 've said," replied Ninian.

"Wha kens the limmer ? Whare d' ye come frae ?" she asked, turning a furious look and the candle full on Henriette.

"Mary !" cried Ninian.

"What 'll Bargarran dae to ye ! Ye 're red-wud, Maister Nin !"

"Give her that room this minute," said Ninian, pointing to the door next Mrs. McClintock's.

"Aweel, aweel ! Gude help us a' when Bargarran comes hame !" cried the housekeeper, while Ninian went downstairs.

She then opened the door of the room next her own and shoved Henriette into it.

"Waesucks ! Bargarran 's awa' ! Ye hae nae claites, jade ?"

Henriette began to understand that she was being addressed.

"Madame," she said, "pardon?"

"Ye spak?" asked Mrs. McClintock in reply. "What d' ye say, woman?"

"De gentleman is most kind," said Henriette, timidly.

"Whare d' ye come frae? Ye 're in the wrang gate, hizzie. How daur ye come in sic a place? D' ye ken Bargarran?" demanded Mrs. McClintock, turning out blankets and linen from a cupboard.

"*Oh mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Henriette, terrified. "Let me go, let me to go!"

"Ay, gang awa', gang awa'. Ye 've been rinnin' in the streets o' this Sodom. I dinna like ye. Maister Nin's daft or fuddled. Lord be thankit, Bargarran's awa'!"

She came up to Henriette, looked at her menacingly, and lifted a hand as if to strike her.

"*À moi! à moi!*" cried Henriette.

"What are ye scraichin' at like onie pair-trick?" demanded Mrs. McClintock, flinging bedclothes at Henriette. "Mak' your ain

bed, hizzie, and as ye mak' it, ye 'll hae to lie on 't !”

“Tank you, madame,” said Henriette.

Mrs. McClintock moved towards the door.

“Fa' on your knees,” she said, “and say your prayers, gin ye hae onie.”

She put out the light and left Henriette in total darkness, and locked the door. As she arrived on the landing again, carrying the candle and the key, she looked for Dalbiac, but he had disappeared downstairs.

“I 'm waefu' for Bargarran,” soliloquised Mrs. McClintock, as she went back to bed to pass a stormy night. “I winna sleep a wink. Gude help us ! We 've been owre lang here. I 'm dowie for auld Bargarran !”

Indeed, it was only the young Bargarran who slept quietly that night. As for Henriette, she needed none of Mrs. McClintock's blankets, but crept through the darkness of the room and sat at the window, which was built on the roof overlooking Piccadilly. The window was open, and she felt the tepid air of the summer night. She looked down upon Piccadilly, and heard footfalls on the pavements. She blessed

Ninian's name, but shed bitter tears, wondering what Dalbiac would do to her in the morning. As for Dalbiac, he was wondering what he should do to her that night. He was walking through the house. A wise writer has said that the reason why no man appears a hero to his valet is because the valet is not a hero. At any rate, it was true in this case. Dalbiac's curious mind was already mistrusting Ninian's purpose in bringing Henriette into the house. Since Ninian had been kind to her and had been so anxious to see her on this side the door, a fierce suspicion and jealousy awoke in Dalbiac. He was incapable of mastering his feelings. She was no longer his, in any sense of truth or of justice, and yet she *was* his by reason of her own desire. He went on tiptoe to the door, ignorant that it was locked. But he paused, because strange motives were paralysing his own passions. The blackmailer is hungry for other men's sins, and Dalbiac expected to hear Ninian's footstep on the stair. In the midst of his inverted instincts lay a clear perception of the real value of the situation. He could hardly believe that the boy was lying

in an undisturbed sleep. He stole back and forward between the two rooms ; and to assure himself, he slipped in the grey of the morning into Ninian's bedroom. The boy was certainly asleep. Dalbiac stood in the middle of the room and looked at him for a few moments.

"*Sacr*— if you touch her !" he exclaimed involuntarily, and clenched his fist.

Suddenly Ninian turned as if waking, and heard footsteps in his room.

"Oh, it's you, Dalbiac ! You're early up," he said drowsily and turned on his side.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry to disturb you. Your boots were not outside," replied Dalbiac, retreating.





CHAPTER III

BARGARRAN'S RETURN

HENRIETTE watched the daybreak glimmering across the Green Park and passing southwards over dim myriad roofs. She had lain huddled on the floor all night, and in spite of herself had dropped into wild sleep and dreams. Her strange, pale eyes were still paler as they shrank from the light, which seemed terrible to her, as it always seems to those who, as soon as they wake, feel the renewed shock of their misfortune. She watched the sparrows hopping on the window-ledge, looking for food. She felt she must be hungrier than they were. She had eaten nothing for sixteen hours and was sick with fasting. Yet she desired to escape. She dreaded to meet the housekeeper and Dalbiac, whose reproaches would annihilate

her. She stole to the door, but found it was locked ; and then she knew she must meet either the one or the other of them or both. She wondered whether she would see Ninian, and if she would be allowed to thank him once more. She was amazed at her own boldness and the sharpness of misery and terror of life that had driven her begging to such a door ; but her chief anxiety centred in Dalbiac's anger, which she told herself would be merited because she had thus compromised him and made him ashamed in the sight of his master. Suddenly she heard first a hand on the door and then a voice which, although it spoke in whispers, she knew was raging. Dalbiac, indeed, unable to control himself, was at last attempting to break in, and supposed that the door was fastened from the inside. He knew that as soon as the housekeeper understood who Henriette was, the excitement in the house would be doubled. He was talking in a low tone in French, and whispering furiously, "Open ! open !" while Henriette cried piteously that she had been locked in. She shut her ears to his oaths and his perpetual

"*Sacr— sacr—*" and cried faintly in reply : "*Eh bien, c'est fini ! Tue moi !*" Presently Dalbiac heard Mrs. McClintock stirring in the next room, and he retreated hastily downstairs.

Mrs. McClintock had determined to rise earlier than usual for the purpose of turning Henriette out of the house before young Bargarran might awake. But she asked herself if she had not been suffering from nightmare, and whether it were actually possible that a strange woman taken off the streets was in the house.

"The hizzie, to daur to come in sic a place !" she exclaimed as she opened her door hastily and took the key of Henriette's and came on to the landing. "The Lord be thankit Bargarran 'll ken naethin' aboot it !"

When Henriette heard a key being turned in the door, she expected to see Dalbiac, and her face became as white as a human face could ever become. The sight of the house-keeper, who was a gigantic woman with grey hair and somewhat ruddy countenance, made her hardly less afraid. But Mrs. McClintock, who had been preparing voluble exhortations

for Henriette, was suddenly struck dumb at the child's terrified appearance. Sleeplessness and the agony of the past few days, and the agony of the moment, and her shabby clothes, caused her to cut the most miserable figure. She had fled to the window, and was trembling against the sash like a wounded bird. The harsh tones of Mrs. McClintock's voice became all at once softer, and the springs of the old woman's pity were actually in motion.

"Gude help us, I'll nae hurt ye, ava!" she exclaimed; and then, glancing at the bed and the unused bedclothes, she asked: "Ye hae nae slept a wink?"

Henriette only guessed the meaning of the words, but the kinder accents made the tears come, and she murmured a timid, "*Bon jour, madame!*"

"Weel, weel," said Mrs. McClintock, "ye needna be quakin'. Gie's your hand, ye puir wee thing. But ye maun gae hame, ye ken. Whare d' ye come frae? Ye hae a hame? Ye dinna look like a limmer aff the streets. Ye maun eat some wee morsel, lassie. It gies

me a dirl to see ye. Dinna greet, dinna greet, ye puir bairnie."

Henriette kissed Mrs. McClintock's hands, weeping afresh and unable to answer her questions. She said something, however, in broken English which the housekeeper understood to be a reference to young Bargarran, and all at once Mrs. McClintock's manner changed. She looked hard at Henriette.

"He's nae for sic limmers as ye!" she said. "Wha are ye?" Then she became more violent and looked menacingly at Henriette. "Och, ye bad jillet!" she continued. "Gae 'wa frae here! Do ye daur to lift his name! I canna thole lookin' at ye!"

Henriette moved away from her, struggling to understand these unfamiliar words and the meaning of the sudden change in Mrs. McClintock's demeanour.

"Come awa' doon," ordered Mrs. McClintock, leading the way down the stair. "Ye're the wrang side o' the door, hizzie!"

Henriette followed, supposing that she was being taken to breakfast. Mrs. McClintock stopped on the stair, muttering:

“He ’ll be in sic a fury! I ’ll hae to give the jade some siller,” and she opened her purse and brought out a shilling. “Tak it,” says she; and Henriette quietly accepted the gift.

In another moment Mrs. McClintock was horrified to hear Ninian’s voice below, and when she looked over the balustrade she saw him mounting the stair.

“Is the young Laird daft?” she asked, casting fierce and suspicious glances on Henriette. She always knew that Ninian was, as she said, “fu’ o’ whigmeleeries” (full of strange whims), but she was just on the point of congratulating herself that she had saved him from the consequences of this last ambiguous escapade.

Ninian, however, had been unable to sleep after Dalbiac had inadvertently roused him, and he lay thinking about Henriette. He shrewdly suspected that old Mary might be turning her early out of doors, especially since he had given no orders that she was to be allowed to remain. When Dalbiac came back to lay out suits and change studs and neckties, he was surprised to find Ninian already half dressed.

"Well, Dalbiac," said Ninian, "it's all right now, I suppose?"

"Pardon me, sir,—I don't wish to see Mademoiselle Tillinac—I would rather not stay here, if she is to stay," replied Dalbiac, tentatively.

"Well," said Ninian, laughing, "it's not my business to turn you off. You're in earnest? You think you will find a prettier little girl than that?"

"I'm in dead earnest, sir."

"It's no affair of mine. But I do think," continued Ninian, while Dalbiac looked steadily at him, "you were rather rough on her last night, you know. Anyway, we'll see what can be done for her."

"Sir," said Dalbiac, "I've no desire to marry. I am satisfied to serve you and your father, sir."

"All right, all right," broke in Ninian. "These beastly collars—look here, ask these laundry people why they make them like cast-iron; not a stud will go in. There! Well, I was saying, I'll see what can be done for your Henriette."

Dalbiac held a jacket ready while Ninian put it on, saying, "I'm just going up to see Mrs. McClintock about her."

It was at that moment that the astonished housekeeper heard him and saw him as she came hurrying down the stair, hoping to put Henriette into the street before he knew.

"Not so fast, Mary!" he cried, while Mrs. McClintock lifted her hands in dismay.

"Gude mornin', Maister Nin; it's nae aften ye're to be seen at sic an hour," said Mrs. McClintock, looking down reproachfully on Ninian's fresh face.

He returned her "good morning," and smiled kindly to Henriette. Then he took the housekeeper aside on the landing and told her about Henriette and Dalbiac.

At first Mrs. McClintock was so surprised that she hesitated whether to express herself pleased with the news, so far as Ninian was concerned, or indignant with Dalbiac.

"That shamefu' flunkie, d' ye say? Bargarran'll ken it ae day," she said at length, and looked contemptuously at Henriette.

"You leave her alone, Mary," said Ninian.

"Don't molest her. Give her breakfast. He won't have anything to do with her, but I 'm going to see Lady Ossington to-day about her. Let her stay here till I come back."

"Vera weel," replied Mrs. McClintock, reluctantly, "though she 's been owre lang here."

It was now past seven o'clock, and Ninian went down to wait for breakfast, for which Dalbiac prepared dishes in silence.

Mrs. McClintock, followed at a distance by Henriette, looked for Dalbiac, and when she found him addressed him as an "impudent cad," while he dodged her in the passages.

"Ye coward !" she exclaimed, while he carried plates from the kitchen ; "wha wad put a wee bairnie in sic a plight ?"

Dalbiac, however, remained indifferent and silent, and did not deign to cast an eye either on her or on Henriette. He refused to serve Henriette, and left Mrs. McClintock to carry out Ninian's orders. The other servants were an English boy, two maids, and a French man-cook who came in for the day. So amused was

the cook at what the maids told him that he made fun of Henriette and Dalbiac, and devised two little pastry figures of lovers quarrelling, and set them up on the kitchen table. The little woman was holding out two paste hands, while the little man had turned his back in disdain.

“*Ils se brouillent !*” exclaimed the delighted cook, and twirled the figures in his fingers.

Dalbiac and Henriette, however, were at that moment beyond jokes, because the matter was becoming serious between them. Dalbiac's excitement grew every moment as he guessed that perhaps his lover might spend another night in Bargarran House. He clenched his teeth, while the other servants giggled all day, and Mrs. McClintock became the unwilling minister of Ninian's charity. When Henriette offered to take a share in the housework and to dust the furniture, “Na, na,” said Mrs. McClintock ; “nae strange jillet maun fingle thae things,” and ordered her about her business.

Meantime Young Hopeful had gone to the Hôtel de Luxe in search of Lady Ossington.

Since it was still early, he decided to see Debrisay first, and, as he was entering the lift to be taken up to the *étage*, he saw D. P. Slocock, who told him that Mr. Debrisay was at breakfast.

"How are you, my boy?" said Debrisay, greeting him affectionately and with unusual gaiety.

When Ninian said that he had come to speak to Lady Ossington, Debrisay replied that she was not in the hotel.

"She and Ossington have gone to the country. It's a week-end visit. But they will be back to-morrow morning."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ninian; "you must be feeling queer about them, Arthur."

"The truth is," continued Debrisay, pushing his chair back from the little table at which he had been breakfasting, "I suspect they're house-hunting. You know Ossington has let his place in Surrey. It was thought strange, especially at the time of—of his marriage; but now it seems he's determined to take her to the country, and since he can't get his own place back, he's looking for another."

"That 's funny," said Ninian. "Well, I 'll have to wait till to-morrow."

Then he told his errand.

An ambiguous smile broke over Debrisay's face. Ninian, resenting it, hurriedly explained all the details : how that Henriette was, or had been, Dalbiac's girl, but that they had quarrelled, and that he had thrown her off ; how she had come weeping and starving to the door, asking for help. "And you know what the rest would have been," added Ninian. "I would n't have her kicked out. I thought they would make it up in the morning, but they won't, it seems."

"Well, now," said Debrisay, "supposing your father came home ?"

• "That 's impossible," replied Ninian ; "he said he would be away for ten days at least."

"Or supposing that you fell in love with the girl ?"

"That 's impossible, too," said Ninian, laughing outright.

"You 're keeping her against Dalbiac's will," insisted Debrisay.

"Dash it, I 'm not a prig nor a Puritan, but

I'm hanged if I would have seen that girl flung out into Piccadilly last night! You should see her—a lovely little thing. The truth is, I'll *tell* my father about it. Dalbiac's a brute, and is n't worth keeping," said Ninian, talking very rapidly.

"But you propose keeping *her* another night?" urged Debrisay.

"Well, I wanted to see Beatrice about her," replied Ninian.

"Come you here to-night. You'll see Beatrice in the morning. Dine with me, and stay the night," invited Debrisay.

"By Jove, Arthur, you're damned cheeky!" said Ninian.

"No," replied Debrisay, "but I think I know your father better than even you do, Nin. The news may come to his ears. Such news in such ears! It will be ever so much better when he understands that you were not in the house. You know he's a—excuse me saying it, but he's a suspicious old boy. And, besides, as you say, that Dalbiac of yours is worth watching. He may be a good servant, but he's a sly devil, I believe. You might become

most disagreeably compromised, you know. Altogether, Nin, don't you see it would be much better to come here or give the girl money and send her away?"

"Oh, I'll *dine* with you, Arthur; but as for sleeping with you, no thank you, dear mamma," said Ninian, laughing. "Now I must be going. Are you riding to-day?"

"No," said Debrisay. "Well, I'll expect you at eight o'clock."

Ninian went back to Bargarran House and told Mrs. McClintock that Henriette must stay another night.

"Anither nicht?" replied Mrs. McClintock, in disgust. "It's shamefu', Maister Nin. Ye're daft. What d' ye say, laddie?"

"I've told you, Mary," said Ninian, angrily.

"Maister Nin, I winna thole it," said Mrs. McClintock, obstinately. "I wad turn them baith oot this minute, and sae wad your faither, ye ken weel."

Ninian told her to be quiet.

"Vera weel," she said, "I wash my ain hands o't. Gude help ye, gin your auld daddie comes hame!"

Ninian laughed, called Dalbiac to him, ordered his horse for *eleven*, and dressed himself in white drills and patent leathers. He heard old Mary passing up the stair and muttering in such a way as to let him hear: "Gin the limmer stay here anither night, she'll be lockit up as I wad hae to lock up tigers and sic wild beasts!"

When the horse was at the door and Ninian was about to mount, one of the maid-servants, who, in order to spite Dalbiac, had struck up a sudden friendship with Henriette, took her to a window to let her see Ninian in the saddle.

"Ain't he smart?" she asked.

Henriette agreed that he was superb, and when she heard that she was to remain at least another night at Bargarran House, she wept tears of joy.

Meantime Dalbiac was on fire with the same news. He would have surrendered half his banked money to know what was passing in Ninian's mind, and for that matter in Henriette's. He was in an incredible state of envy, jealousy, and passion. What perturbed him most was the possibility that Henriette

might receive favours from young Bargarran. He felt now that she was become his dangerous enemy. It brought him near the point of frenzy to suppose that she might actually come under Ninian's protection. He went uneasily through the house, beginning work and not finishing it, so that he gave new cause for the housekeeper's hostility towards him. Indeed, whenever she met him, Mrs. McClintock renewed her attacks. He had refused to sit at the same table with Henriette and the other servants. The fact that she was already winning sympathy from them, while he was being boycotted and ostracised, irritated his self-love. Henriette, in fact, had actually begun to smile at the *bon-mots* of the cook, who made her eat the little pastry figure of herself which he had made. "*Il faut avaler la tragédie!*" he said, "*eh, ma petite?*" and thereupon he swallowed the statue of Dalbiac. Upstairs the real Dalbiac was astonished to hear the trill of Henriette's laugh. So sudden and mysterious a change awakened new suspicions. And, indeed, his resentment of Henriette's returning gaiety

was fully shared by Mrs. McClintock, who augured the worst things from it. When she came up and found Dalbiac sitting sullenly in the hall, "Wae's me," she said, "ye needna doubt Bargarran 'll ken a' this ae day."

Dalbiac retorted that that was what he hoped.

"What d'ye say?" asked Mrs. McClintock, "wad *ye* daur to say in Bargarran's lug that ye brought your jillet here?"

When Dalbiac insinuated that it was a Bargarran who was alone responsible for Mademoiselle Tillinac's invitation to remain in Bargarran House, Mrs. McClintock, although conscious of the same fact, turned upon him angrily for having given expression to it.

"Fegs!" says she, "ye 'll hae your fairins. Dinna fash. Bargarran 'll come hame, and wae's me for sic trash as ye!"

Dalbiac went into the dining-room determined to be rid of her. Presently he heard a soft foot and the rustle of a gown. He came out on tiptoe from the dining-room, and saw Henriette going up the stairs. He paused,

and after she was out of sight, followed her to the room in which she had passed the night. While her back was still towards him he startled her by a loud and indignant exclamation. She turned sharply and gave him a fierce glance. Already some change had taken place in her fears and feelings. All day the other servants had been telling her that she was a fool to vex herself on Dalbiac's account—that he loved other girls, and had actually received visits from them. She had begun to realise at last, therefore, his definite hostility, neglect, and ill-will, but simultaneously with her awakening came the sense of young Bargarran's protection. She told Dalbiac with startling suddenness that she had loved him too long and too well, and that he was a heartless scoundrel, upon whom she had wasted her affections. She expressed with extraordinary vigour and fire this revulsion of feeling, which was so exaggerated by the sense of past humiliation. "*Toi! toi!*" he cried, and asked her how she dared. But she ordered him out of the room. All at once the prospect of her becoming Ninian's mistress

blazed in his mind, and he taunted her with it. Henriette demanded what that was to him, supposing it were true, and told him to go about his business, and warned him that if he molested her she would report him. Dalbiac was stunned. Was she actually free then at last, and gone out of his grasp? The long nightmare of idolatry and adulation was over. It was in vain that he insulted her with "Cocotte! cocotte!" In order to put the prong deeper into him, and break up and riddle out his vanity, she told an untruth and said that young Bargarran had made love to her. Dalbiac came nearer to her and pressed her against the wall.

"Go, go!" she cried. "Go, low heart! Touch me not! I have lost everything because of you. I brought myself to fury and ruin because of you. I have nothing now in the world except the protection of a gentleman. *À moi! à moi!*"

Afraid lest her cry might be heard, Dalbiac relaxed his grasp, but still stood breathing against her while his eyes looked wildly into hers. Dazed and bewildered, he was thinking

of the coming night. And now—such is the farce of the psychology of human passion—since she was no longer his, he was desirous of possessing her. There is a love which is a kind of inverted hate.

“*Sacr—*” he said, as he left her, conscious of having learned new lessons and waiting to learn more. His mind began to play with the idea of murder.

When Ninian returned, Dalbiac was hardly fit to serve him, but he staggered through his day’s duties like a man in a wild dream. Ninian came home from the Row, ordered his bath and then his luncheon and then his dog-cart. He spent the afternoon driving Bob Gartly round the Park and amusing that young man by a narrative of the excitements at Bargarran House.

“Of course,” said Gartly, laughing, “you’re going to dine at home to-night?”

“No, with Debrisay,” said Ninian.

“Hang Debrisay,” replied Gartly. “I hate him!”

Ninian dropped him at Victoria Gate and drove home. He found his evening clothes

laid out for him, got into them, and told Dalbiac that his services would not be required that night.

"You may go out, Dalbiac," said Ninian.
"I'm dining with Mr. Debrisay."

"Thank you, sir," said Dalbiac, who was trembling; "I would rather remain indoors to-night."

Ninian seemed to detect agitation in the voice and looked carefully at Dalbiac for a moment; but presently a knock came, and Dalbiac went to answer. The boy in buttons handed in a note for Ninian. Dalbiac noticed that it was addressed in Henriette's handwriting, and turned pale while Ninian opened it.

"Ha, ha! the little girl wants to speak to me. What's up now? Did n't I tell Mary to say to her that Lady Ossington won't be home till to-morrow, and that she may therefore remain here to-night? Well — put her in the library, I'll be down directly," said Ninian to the boy.

Dalbiac knelt down and buttoned Ninian's evening boots.

"Thanks," said Ninian, going out of the room and downstairs, while Dalbiac followed him.

Henriette had heard that Ninian was going out that night, and she was afraid he might not return. Since her interview with Dalbiac the mere sight of him terrified her, and she trembled in case he might break into her room. Yet she had no desire to leave Bargarran House, and thus wanted urgently to speak with Ninian. That night he was looking remarkably handsome. No doubt he had a certain haughty glance, disliked by some of his friends and ridiculed by his enemies. The thin lips tightly closed, the upward setting of the head, the clear and sometimes disdainful eyes, gave him a proud look. But it was not an empty or ostentatious pride, but a trait transmitted from bold ancestors who had fought long ago many a stiff clan fight. At any rate, Henriette had reason to believe in his goodness of heart. She came, however, timidly into his presence, as beseemed her. He said to her that since Lady Ossington was out of town he could do nothing until the next day.

"Did they not tell you so?" he asked. "I said you might remain."

Henriette showed herself grateful, thanked him very heartily, and then ventured to tell him why she was afraid. Ninian frowned, and rang his bell, which Dalbiac immediately answered. Speaking in French, so that the girl might understand, he warned Dalbiac in a few rapid words, threatened to report him to The Bargarran, and added that Dalbiac should be ashamed of himself. At these words Henriette burst into tears again. Dalbiac was then ordered to leave the room, and he went with a ghastly smile on his lip.

"Now it will be all right," said Ninian to Henriette, who ventured to kiss his hand. "A pretty little girl like you, Henriette, need have no fear, eh?"

He put his hand on her shoulder, and was speaking in the low, tender voice adored by women.

"The truth is," he said, looking steadily into her eyes, and with now a hand on each of her shoulders—"the truth is, Henriette, *if I did n't love another woman*, I might love you. You

are beautiful, Henriette. But I love another woman — I must go — Good-night, Henriette——”

However, Ninian was doomed not to go until a terrible encounter had taken place between him and his father, who at the very instant was hurrying back and had reached the door. For throughout his journey north the old man had been the victim of the strangest fears. He had been repenting, indeed, that he had ever started, and he lay tossing in the sleeping-car, wondering what Ninian might be doing. His affection for the boy had now assumed the form of a morbid anxiety about the development of Ninian's character, and he was haunted by the idea, which had now become permanent, that he should blame only himself if Ninian went to wreck in the great vortex of the temptations of London. He almost deplored the boy's handsome looks, his easy and lovable manner, and the fact that he was master of a considerable sum of money, because these things were pitfalls. In spite of what he had said, he distrusted Ninian, and, unhappily, Ninian knew it. This was the fact

which had driven them asunder from the beginning. And yet, paradoxical as it may sound, it was only out of affection in the form of anxiety that Bargarran distrusted him. Ninian had actually become an agony to Bargarran, and the boy knew that fact also. He did not, to be sure, expect his father to return like a thief in the night, but he guessed that the old man was being already tormented by these self-inflicted fears. Bargarran, in short, was imagining that Ninian might be engaged in a debauch, and although he felt ashamed of these suspicions, he could not drive them away from him. The thought of Ninian's sudden contamination made him almost maniacal. In vain he told himself that his boy was honest, and had, besides, given his word of honour that he would walk straight.

"My Ninian has a heart as open and as beautiful as his face!" said the old man in agony, labouring with his doubts. "What on earth do I *mean*? O God, give me faith even as a grain of mustard-seed!"

He muttered these things to himself many a time. But the fact that Ninian had never yet

been smirched, and that his record was so fair, made the possibility and threat of one single slip a double horror. Thus, while the train went rolling north, Bargarran lay sleepless in the sleeping-car.

"I told the boy I trusted him, and there's an end of it," he repeated to himself.

But the lurid pathway of Piccadilly, lurid like a serpent, agitated his imagination. He distrusted everything now. Out of the lonely eyrie of age he gazed like an old angry eagle at the vices of men.

"Nin, Nin," he had once said, "if you dare abuse your soul! You are mine, Nin, and God's—. The only crusade, the only holy war, is against the Destroyer."

This amazing sense of property, a kind of transplanted egoism and sore jealousy, corrupted all his thoughts about the boy. He fought against these ideas as men fight their oncoming mania, but it was to no purpose. Thus, he was barely twelve hours out of London before he repented that he had left it at all. Whatever business needed to be transacted might have been done by letter or tele-

gram. At any rate, it would not be done now. Had it been possible, he would have stopped the express. All he could do was to take the morning train back again, two or hardly three hours after he had arrived.

But it was only to be expected that, as he approached London, he should begin to ask himself what excuse he should make to Ninian. Nay, as he came nearer and nearer his own door he grew afraid of Ninian. How the proud boy would scorn him, thought Bargarran, and how cruelly he would penetrate through every miserable excuse to the real truth !

Mrs. McClintock, whose thoughts had been on Bargarran all day, heard a cab stop, and then came the ringing of the bell. "Gude help us, it's Bargarran !" she exclaimed, running upstairs with the intention of warning Ninian. But before she reached the entrance-hall Dalbiac had opened the door and The Bargarran, who had become visibly older in twenty-four hours, was walking in. His eagle face seemed shrunken, and the silver hair beneath the dark soft hat seemed whiter. He carried his plaid over his arm, while his white hand

grasped his crook. Even Dalbiac turned pale at this sudden apparition. The housekeeper knew that Ninian and Henriette were in the library, and that since that room was at the back they had probably not heard Bargarran's entry.

"Ye're hame? Ye're like ony wraith, Bargarran!" she exclaimed, advancing to meet him. "What's wrang?"

The old man smiled faintly, and asked her, "Is Ninian in?"

"I dinna ken," replied Mrs. McClintock, while she saw Bargarran moving as if to enter the library.

"Ye needna gae in there," she said quietly, endeavouring to intercept him.

Bargarran looked at her.

"What are you whispering for, Mary?" he asked.

"I'm like to greet," says she.

He opened the door without speaking further, and suddenly saw Ninian's two hands on the shoulders of Henriette. Bargarran staggered as Ninian turned round, exclaiming "Father!" A woman's tawdry dress, a mass

of black hair surmounting a pale face composed the image destined to haunt Bargarran till he died. A terrible cry, heard throughout the house and in the basement and in the street, broke from him as he lunged towards his son. For the moment he had lost the power of articulate speech and uttered a sort of ululation of horror and rage.

"What do you mean, Father?" cried Ninian, preparing to protect the girl. "Why have you come back?"

"Merciful heavens, why have I come *back*!" shouted Bargarran, while Henriette instinctively went closer to Ninian.

The suddenness of the encounter, the gestures and attitudes, the sense each had of something blazing within him, made the situation in a moment irretrievable.

"Take care!—Wait till you hear—don't dare touch her!" cried Ninian. "You are mad; you are mistaken. Father!"

"Oh, it was this I expected; this that was dragging me back and giving me no rest. Out, ruffian—out—out!"

"What are you daring to do?" demanded

Ninian, rising to his full height and putting himself between his father and Henriette. "I tell you *wait*.—You are mad.—Wait till you hear the truth. Dalbiac, Dalbiac, tell him the truth !"

But Dalbiac stood silent in the doorway, while Mrs. McClintock cried : " Bargarran, ye 're red-wud. The laddie hae done naethin' wrang !"

But Bargarran, obeying the first fierce instincts that came uppermost, attempted to seize Henriette.

"You coward !" cried Ninian ; and every word he uttered and every gesture he made gave innocence the appearance of guilt, until Bargarran was actually attempting to fight his son.

Suddenly they both stood still, transfixed and looking at each other. Bargarran's frame was visibly vibrating, while Henriette in tears clung to Ninian, and by her attitude aggravated Bargarran's indignation and only redoubled his already gigantic error.

" Out ! out !" cried the old man, staggering towards them.

"Ye 'll repent it ae day," said Mrs. McClintock, wringing her hands, while Dalbiac, at an order from Bargarran, went to open the front door.

"You come to spy on me!" exclaimed Ninian. "You're a monster! Yes, I'll go out, because you're not fit to be lived with!"

He passed into the hall and seized his hat and coat. Mrs. McClintock endeavoured vainly to hold him back.

"Whare ye gaun?" she said, weeping. "It mustna be, Maister Nin! Wi' that jillet! It's shamefu', Maister Nin!" And then, when he said good-bye and walked out, followed by Henriette, Mrs. McClintock lifted up her hands in dismay. "Frae ilka danger keep him safe!" she implored.

Dalbiac held the door wide open, and Ninian and Henriette descended the steps and found themselves on the pavement.

"My God, what has happened!" said Ninian, as he saw the door being shut; "my father's mad. He thinks I love you." He made a movement to run up the steps again, but shrugged his shoulders and stood looking at

7

Henriette in the blazing electric light. She stood trembling for his decision.

"You must shift for yourself. Here's money," he said, giving her three sovereigns. "Get a decent lodging. Don't misunderstand. I told you I love another woman. But I'll help you, Henriette. Good God, what an awful infamous night! Come to-morrow to the Hôtel de Luxe at three o'clock. Ask for Lady Ossington. Good-night."

Henriette, stupefied, muttered her gratitude. She was too stunned to weep, and when he left her she went down Piccadilly as if in a dream.

And Debrisay had his wish fulfilled that night, because Ninian stayed with him. It took Debrisay four hours to quiet him, and then he put him to bed, although Ninian kept raging and refused to lie down.

"Arthur, send Slocock for all my things at once. Curse me if I ever open that door again. Arthur! O God, dear Arthur, for heaven's sake stay beside me! I have not one friend in this world. I never had one. My father is a monster. I knew it. I knew I

had been living with a monster for years—. He wanted an excuse to drive me out. Listen, Arthur, it was this——”

And he told everything again over and over, until Debrisay, afraid lest brain fever might supervene, thought of summoning a doctor.

“Have you sent Slocock?” asked Ninian.

“Yes,” said Debrisay; “yes, Nin. Quiet yourself. Sleipner knows you’re here, and will give you rooms in the morning.”

“Arthur, sleep beside me, for God’s sake, or I’ll go mad!” cried Ninian.

“All right,” said Debrisay; “look, here I am.”

It was long past midnight before D. P. Slocock, who had been sent to Bargarran House with an order for Ninian’s luggage, came back with two trunks and a packing-box, bags, hat-cases, and gun-cases. Bargarran had dismissed the other servants downstairs, and watched Dalbiac and Slocock carrying the luggage out. When the door was shut he had another paroxysm of rage.

“My son—Yes, ha—ha, into the streets,

d'ye say? Gone down, has he?— He's with her, then?" he said, falling in a heap in Dalbiac's arms, and repeating with intermittent gasps : " For without are dogs — and sorcerers — and whoremongers — and murderers, and — idolaters, — and whosoever loveth — and maketh a lie."





CHAPTER IV

THE HÔTEL DE LUXE

SLEIPNER'S mode of life made him happy. And he was surprised whenever he met any one who pretended to find human existence dull. It was a joy to him to watch the arrivals, and sometimes a supreme joy to watch the departures of his guests. Those of them, for instance, who drank the cheaper wines suffered from his contempt. But when every bedroom, every sitting-room was occupied, when the ball-room was engaged and the two restaurants were filled, and when the great cellars were being heavily drawn upon, Sleipner sat in his glass office, from which he watched the main current of the hotel's life, and, tapping his fingers on his desk, said, "Everything is humming." There was even a sort of pleasure in

turning away disappointed clients, because it meant that "The Luxe is always full" would be on every one's lips. The property was not entirely Sleipner's, but he was fast making it his own. Every year saw a diminution of the mortgages, which meant that Sleipner's credit was rising in the world; so that, for instance, if he required a new loan to enable him to carry out extensions or improvements it could easily be obtained. As it was, he had two solid banks behind him. Sleipner was an Austrian who had become naturalised. He had educated himself carefully, and in spite of obscure origin was already a person with pretensions to good style. He had been all over the world. He was now forty-six, but his perpetual frock-coat covered an apparently still youthful figure. It was evident that he patronised a first-class tailor. A well-chosen necktie, well-fitting clothes, patent-leather boots, a pleasing face carefully shaved, and dark hair carefully brushed gave him the appearance of an unostentatious dandy. Each stage of his career had found him learning something new, so that when the time came

for him to dress as befitted his position, he was never found making any errors of taste. His ambition was to be a connoisseur in whatever he touched.

Sleipner was still unmarried. It would have bored him to carry on a domestic ménage in the midst of a great hotel. He remained a bachelor with a suite of five hundred exquisite rooms. And his pleasure in life consisted "in feeling," as he said, "the pulse of his hotel." He rejoiced that his decorations, his furniture and pictures, the marble of the pillars, the carpets, the rugs—in short, the fittings of the entire house—were worthy of being approved by the superior class to whose tastes he appealed. In the Hôtel de Luxe, for instance, there were no glaring lights—"the terror," he said, "of all but the very youngest and prettiest women." Both during the day and at night the great spaces in the hotel, the central lounge, the winter garden, and the public rooms were filled with a fine harmony of light. Moreover, Sleipner knew the value of mirrors skilfully placed in such positions as pleased his vainer guests, who might admire

themselves without interruption. And his liveries require mention. Sleipner's liveries were famous. He detested the dull, greasy black of ordinary waiters. It was one of his maxims that good taste is an asset. He loved colour prudently distributed, and his waiters, who were almost all young, wore scarlet Eton jackets and the cleanest linen. The scene in the great dining-room was thus very brilliant every evening. Indeed, it was a great matter for a young man to secure a place at Sleipner's. And it was one of Dalbiac's chief regrets on leaving the hotel that he had to put off a uniform in which he had made so many conquests. "I notice," said Sleipner, "that the world loves uniform. It seems to be attractive to every one." Each floor had a concierge dressed in knee-breeches, white stockings, and shoes with buckles. "And see that the stockings *are* white!" ordered Sleipner. Porters, pages, chambermaids were all chosen from the best of their class.

Sleipner boasted that he was able to judge a human face as quickly and as accurately as he could judge the state of a cutlet without

requiring to eat it. He knew his profession from below upwards, and once told a beginner that the only foundation upon which to build a hotel successfully is the kitchen. "For mankind are gluttons. They all eat far too much." His cuisine had a very wide reputation, and it seems that it was an Eastern King who said that he intended to return to London if for no other purpose but to eat a dinner at the Hôtel de Luxe. Sliepner, in short, observed the new wave of luxury invading England. It was this perception which made him so earnest about every detail — the quality of the bedding, the baths, the proper thickness of carpets and large rugs, the breadth, depth, and softness of chairs, lounges, and *fauteuils* — everything, in fact, which modern sybaritism demands. He ransacked Europe for cooks. He laid perfect baits. He spent hours studying and restudying his wine-list. "The idealists," he once said to an under-manager, "are so *drôles*. They do not see that the ultimate principle is *devorandum*, a Latin word, I may tell you, which means *to be devoured*. That gives the key to history as

well as to cookery. Devourers and devoured, that 's all we know."

Sleipner congratulated himself on his knowledge of the world. He thought that the manager (or actor-manager, as he preferred to call himself) of a great modern hotel has an opportunity of knowing really far too much. At any rate, a great deal of intrigue had come his way. He was as keen as a banker in suspecting empty purses and empty pockets. His diagnosis of a newcomer was supreme, and he seldom revised his judgments. Not once nor twice a doubtful client, anxious to date letters from the Hôtel de Luxe, had been turned away sorrowing. "Not a room! You cannot give us a single room, Mr. Sleipner!"

"No, I am sorry; nor a double one either," said Sleipner, sympathetically, turning out the plan of the building and showing red crosses on every space. "Full up, you see." Perhaps fifty rooms might be vacant. But Sleipner had to be forever in readiness for unexpected visits from distinguished habitués. Besides, his was not the sort of conscience that requires easing. He had certain dislikes,

"I dislike children," he said. "Of course, who would not love them—but a hotel-keeper—no. They don't *drink* anything." Thus he looked askance at large families not yet in their teens. Then, he gave orders that stray visitors in search of cold meat were not to be encouraged. "As if this place is a buffet!" he exclaimed, "or as if my fortune can be made out of *hors d'œuvres!*" But nothing pleased him better than to look down from the gallery on the central lounge, and to watch it being filled by a well-bred crowd after dinner. Then he would walk round the heavily carpeted passages, and ask each *sommelier* whether he supposed Madame la Princesse or M. le Duc had satisfactorily dined. He had a blind eye for a *drame d'amour*. He delighted in well-bred gossip. He thought his hotel merited its name, and that it was an admirable *mise-en-scène* for the gay people who came to make each other happy or miserable by a word or a glance. "But, *mon Dieu*, their fatigue!" said Sleipner.

It was Sleipner's privilege to win the confidence and esteem of some of them. "I

remember," he says in his *Memoirs*, for the man actually wrote memoirs, "meeting the Marquis of — on board the steamer which plies between Tunis and Malta. His lordship did me the honour to walk with me on the promenade deck. There was a considerable surge, many people were ill, and even *we* had difficulty in walking with steadiness. 'But you notice, Sleipner,' said his lordship, who was a good sailor, 'that the majority of those who are ill are in the steerage. The power to conquer sea-sickness lies in good breeding! It is the power of self-repression which comes from the prolonged discipline of good manners. You and I' (his lordship did me this honour) 'should be as sick as they are if our wills were as weak.' This may have been his lordship's facetiousness, but I think it was a shrewd observation." At any rate, that Marquis was always a welcome figure at the Hôtel de Luxe, and although he was only a laggard payer, many an inferior client was turned out to make room for him. Sleipner observed with pleasure that although as a rule the most distinguished persons preferred small hotels, yet

many of them came to the Hôtel de Luxe; and it was a great satisfaction to be able to look out of a window and to see the street full of their broughams.

For instance, he had genuine pleasure in booking a suite for Lord and Lady Ossington and the adjoining one for Debrisay. If the presence of Debrisay and the Ossingtons lunching at separate tables in the Italian Room brought such people as Count d'Avoncourt, Sir Charles Dartnell, Lady Mackworth, Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Beckingham, Mr. Vincent and Lady Dorothy Woodbridge, Princess Likoff, and so on, it was surely all the better. Ossington was becoming a pivot of interest for all. At least he was engaging the attention of Sleipner, to whom he complained that he could get no sleep in the Hôtel de Luxe.

"And yet your lordship's room is on the quiet side. We expressly arranged for that. May I inquire does her ladyship sleep?" asked Sleipner.

Ossington seemed to detect a certain subtle sarcasm in this question, asked though it was

in Sleipner's most sympathetic, most dutiful manner. He turned and looked at him, and said blankly: "I don't know. I suspect not."

The truth was, of course, that Beatrice was taking opiates. Her sleeplessness was continual. "And I notice," said Dartnell, "that the corners of her mouth have been drooping recently." The night of the ball, after she had divested herself of that gorgeous gown which had rustled past Debrisay's door and was still rustling in his ears, she lay awake till the morning. No doubt many a hostess is unable to sleep after she has given a party because her mind may be busy with the question whether it has been a success, or whether any great person has had cause to feel that he or she had received insufficient attention. Lady A. may have been in a temper all night, and Lord M. in a huff. The wrong sort of people may have been introduced to each other, and persons who had recently quarrelled may have been suddenly put into each other's arms. These things, however, were hardly troubling Beatrice. She had danced the last dance with young Bargarran, who had whis-

pered to her a great deal about Debrisay. Beatrice was very fond of Ninian, whom she had known since his boyhood. His mother had been kind to her, and Beatrice determined to attempt to fill her place towards Ninian, even although she was only eight years older than he.

"Poor Arthur," Ninian had said to her. "He's magnificent! Beatrice, will you allow *me* to bring you together again? What's the harm? It's time now."

"Come and sit with me for a moment," said Beatrice, and when they were in the vestibule she continued: "Why should your friend disgrace himself by following us about? It's ridiculous."

"He can't help it, I suppose," replied Ninian, laughing. "But he does n't mean to vex you or Lord Ossington. Arthur is not that sort of man. You know it very well, Beatrice. He simply can't help it. He adores you."

"Such a big word!" she exclaimed.

"But it's true," said Ninian, "and I—don't wonder at him—every one loves you."

She gave him a gentle whack with her ostrich fan.

"You foolish, darling boy," she said. "Go to bed. See, every one's going now."

But Ninian's words wrought their way into her mind, and remained fixed: "Arthur is magnificent." And it was dangerous for her that simultaneously Ossington began to appear to be not at all magnificent. Ossington was turning maniacal with distrust of her.

That love is of the quality of lightning—comes as suddenly, vanishes as rapidly, is as zigzag and often as blasting—is known to all of us who have suffered and been seared. The moment of dazzlement when the bright wave of illusion is at its height; the moment of full tide when the soul is conscious of great depth and something sea-like—this had all been known to Beatrice. The *Blitz* in the human soul and the pyrotechnics of its illusion, the soul rolling in its phantasmagoria—these are the things for the amazement and the excitement of all moralists.

Why she had become afraid of Debrisay, Beatrice knew too well. She had heard on all sides that he had a violent temperament, and, indeed, the last time he had held her in his

arms she became suddenly terrified at the depth and reality of his passion for her. That hug was a crush rather than a hug. Worst of all, she had heard that he had a brother mentally afflicted. Nay, Debrisay, who had long withheld the truth, reproached himself with having deceived her, and at last one day, with his lips trembling and his eyes aflame, he asked if that fact would disturb her. He looked at her eagerly, and seemed to see that she was already faltering. He was right. The heat of the man, his devotion to her, which took the form of fetichism and monomania, began to appear to her as signs and warnings. Immediately she found herself in a dilemma. She began to move away from him. In her inmost soul she was a little ashamed, but the future seemed too menacing. She covered up her real reasons, but Debrisay suspected them all. He wrote one last appeal : " There is only one reason for which *I* can go mad, and that is if you abandon me ! Beatrice ! think of the past, and ask yourself if you can dare to make me suffer this terrible deprivation." But the more he urged, the more afraid

she became. The interests of two families, the advice of doctors, lawyers, clergymen, the gratuitous advice of unmasked advisers, together with her own terror, were all making her hasten to a decision. She felt there might be something terrible in him, something too big and deep. Beatrice is hard to understand. No doubt this great sorrow helped to seal up her character and add to its enigmas. She cast spells over people, as Debrisay said, but she cast spells over herself. She buried her love, and flattered herself it was for his good too. Then came her marriage with Ossington two years afterwards. At first the fact that Debrisay kept following her made her believe that she had done right. It looked as if he *were* uncanny, and she was congratulated on her escape.

But it is dangerous for another man to heap his kisses on the kisses of a woman's first lover. And it was not possible for a man like Ossington to fill Debrisay's place. This dual magnetism will finally splinter and split the soul. The first magnetism, like the first impression of glory in the mind of youth, remains,

and is more than a memory. It is omnipotent. *Animus revertendi!* To begin with, Beatrice's continual reproach of herself was a serious factor in her unrest. She began to loathe herself for unkindness, whereas Beatrice was the kindest of women. She had said that she *hated* him, but that had been wrung out of her. She meant only that she was trying to forget him.

A most curious incident took place on the morning after the ball. Bored to death, Beatrice went down to the reading-room in order to see how many of the newspapers had notices about her dance. Tim, her Irish terrier, followed her, and Sleipner met her at the foot of the grand staircase. Had Tim belonged to any one except Lady Ossington, he would have been immediately seized, because no dog was allowed in the public rooms. Sleipner detested dogs. He congratulated Lady Ossington on the magnificent ball—said it was the most distinguished dance of the season as yet, and that it was not likely to be eclipsed later on. Then he stooped down and asked Tim for a paw, patted him, and said :

“He’s a good doggie, is n’t he—is n’t he; is n’t he a good doggie!”

Many a woman, indeed, had said in praise of Sleipner, “He’s so nice to my dog, too!”

Much pleased, Lady Ossington said that she was just going to the reading-room to see if the papers mentioned her dance. Sleipner opened the door for her, and inwardly cursed the dog as it ran in first. No sooner was the door closed than Beatrice saw Debrisay. He had been sitting near one of the tables, but he rose instinctively whenever he saw Beatrice. Tim recognised him at once, bounded towards him, and attempted to jump as high as Debrisay’s face in order to lick it. Unable to get so high, the dog kept licking Debrisay’s hands, while the tail wagged frantically, and joyous barks broke from his throat.

Beatrice had too much sense of humour and pathos not to smile. The suddenness of such a meeting, and the picturesque cause of it, the dog running back and forward between them as an unconscious minister of good-will, had an overpowering effect on Beatrice. The tears were in her eyes and the syllables of his name

were again trembling on her lips; and "Arthur!" and "Beatrice!" marked the flood-tide of reconciliation. She stretched out her hand. But at that moment the voice of Ossington was heard in the corridor, demanding if Lady Ossington had been seen. Presently he appeared at the door, and saw Beatrice's and Debrisay's hands dropping.

"Oh," exclaimed Beatrice, "I was going to look at the newspapers, and—Tim introduced me again to—Mr. Debrisay, George."

She was too proud to appear afraid, said "Good-morning, Mr. Debrisay," and walked out. Ossington, in following her, looked over his shoulder at Debrisay, whose agitation was indisputable and lent itself easily to the most malignant interpretation. And it was not likely that to a man in Ossington's state of mind at that moment *any* explanation offered by his wife would sound acceptable or plausible at all. In fact, the tale sounded ridiculous, and he told her brutally that he did not believe it. He became uncontrollably angry, and ordered her to get packed up.

Beatrice refused; and she knew that Ossing-

ton was not the man to go off alone. Reproach after reproach began to be addressed to her. Their strange honeymoon, and the perpetual presence of Debrisay, who might be said to have taken part in it, the laughing-stock of his continued residence in the Hôtel de Luxe—indeed, every detail of the last few months began to appear in a disastrous light. Beatrice listened to it all, and gave him warning that he was wrong, that he was hopelessly and dishonourably astray in every single conjecture; and then remained silent again.

Ossington renewed the command to leave the Hôtel de Luxe at once, whereupon Beatrice, stung by these insults and in a mood of sudden resentment, said “*You go!*”

It was then that Ossington put himself in Sleipner’s hands. Sleipner looked at him, and noticed his bloodless skin, his small proportions, and the febrile activity of all his features.

“A man of very small bone,” thought Sleipner—“a mere feather in the wind.”

Presently it became clear that Ossington’s sense of the fitness of things was being obscured by the pain which was wrecking him, else surely

he would not have taken Sleipner so suddenly and completely into his confidence.

"Yes," said Sleipner, "*I* saw her go into the reading-room. I had already seen Mr. Debrisay go in. Pardon me, my lord; these rendez-vous ——"

Ossington had made a gesture of indignation which made Sleipner stop. He was amazed at the alacrity and ease with which Sleipner seemed ready to enter into negotiations.

"You are wise," continued the manager, "to avoid the usual method of employing spies."

Ossington was burning already, and told Sleipner not to go so fast.

"Mr. Sleipner," he said in embarrassment, "it is so vague — perhaps I speak too soon. But I am already very ill with it all."

"Yes, your lordship," replied Sleipner; "the longer I live the more amazed I am at all that our human heart contains. You see, a post like this gives one time to *think*."

"I am in great doubt. I wish to be guided," said Ossington. "Think of having a whole hotel for an audience!"

"In any case your lordship may rest assured ——"

"Thank you," said Ossington. "Any little observation you may be able to make — just give me a hint, you know. And, by the way — yes, this is what I meant to say and came to ask — what about *his* departure? Could you not compel him, Mr. Sleipner?"

"Ah, my lord," replied Sleipner, "that indeed would be a delicate affair! Now, how could I approach Mr. Debrisay, one of my best clients, and shoot such a proposition at him? Think of it, my lord. He would immediately demand reasons, and, as even *you* seem to say, everything is very vague. I should be had up, as you say, for defamation."

"But the honour of your hotel?" demanded Ossington.

"Well, I am afraid," said Sleipner, laughing, "that if a manager were to inquire into the history of every one of his guests he would have more empty rooms than he would care for. We let sleeping dogs lie! But I ask you, could I really approach Mr. Debrisay?"

"You are right—you are right, I suppose," said Ossington. "It is so vague."

"Then leave it so, your lordship."

There was one fact which tickled the humour of almost every one involved in this imbroglio, and that fact was the behaviour of the dog. He used to come scraping at Debrisay's door. In the old days Beatrice and Debrisay for their own amusement had taught him to carry letters between them. A little satchel, for which each of them had a key (Debrisay still kept his on his watch-chain), was attached to the dog's collar, and when Beatrice, who was then living with her father, put in a letter and said to Tim, "Take it to Arthur," Tim immediately bounded off to Debrisay's house. Tim was hardly fit to be approached until he had delivered the letter. Then Debrisay sent him back with another, and said, "Take it to Beatrice."

Tim seemed to remember these things, and, having rediscovered Debrisay, was waiting to be employed again. Many a morning he came barking to Beatrice as if to demand a letter. Indeed, D. P. Slocock and Laroche were

thoroughly amused because either the one or the other was sent back and forward with Tim, who took up his position daily at Debrisay's door. It was only Ossington who cursed the ridiculous dog.

Debrisay had not seen Beatrice since he met her in the reading-room, but a real change had taken place. The prolonged and outrageous depression of unappeased love seemed to be somewhat lightened. He was haunted by her tears. No doubt his own terrible and pathetic steadfastness was the laughing-stock of his less indulgent friends ; but the more vainly he loved this one woman, the more the fire of love was heaped within him.

"I mean her and him," he said, "no harm. May I kill myself before I injure *them*. But somehow Beatrice is mine even yet."

He was thus immersed in a sort of hypnotism of love. Once he attempted to assure Ossington of his friendship and good-will and he offered a hand as they passed each other on a stair. Ossington, however, declined it and went angrily past.

"After all," thought Debrisay, shrugging his huge shoulders, "it shows he loves her."

It was with immense surprise that he received a letter one morning through the post :

"HÔTEL DE LUXE.

"DEAR ARTHUR :

"I cannot help writing just to ask you not to be seen speaking to me. I wish you every good in the world, but it is my duty to my husband to ask this.

"BEATRICE OSSINGTON.

"P. S.—Please do not reply."

This little letter, written with simplicity and earnestness, mysteriously consoled Debrisay ; but it altered his mood fundamentally. It was the most dangerous letter ever received by a love-bewildered man.

That afternoon Sleipner invited Debrisay into his private apartments, drew a bottle of Chambertin, and offered one of those cigars for which the Hôtel de Luxe was famous.

"I take this liberty," said Sleipner, "because, Mr. Debrisay, I must take a still greater. Pardon me—that sounds a little unintelligible,

does it? Well, what I want to say is that Lord Ossington is—is—how shall we put it?—*drôle* enough to suspect you."

"Does he?" said Debrisay.

"Yes; he is uneasy—I have authoritative evidence—I thought I should let you know. You are not offended, Mr. Debrisay?"

"Not at all," said Debrisay. "Well?"

"I need hardly say where my sympathies lie," continued Sleipner. "Lady Ossington——"

"Sleipner, this won't do," said Debrisay, rising.

"Ah!" replied Sleipner, laughing, and attempting to dissuade him by pouring out fresh wine. "You drink as slowly, Mr. Debrisay, as if it were Carlsbad water! Well, I was saying I thought I should let you know."

"Thank you—thank you," said Debrisay, a little impatiently; "but such things don't worry me, only I must have no such names mentioned. Please understand, I cannot discuss these things."

Sleipner took the snub with no apparent sign of humiliation, and saw Debrisay walk out distracted and excited.

"These English," said Sleipner, "have no *finesse*, no piquancy. Their love burns as coarsely as their mustard, from which Heaven preserve my tongue! It is fit only for poultices."

That evening, however, a special delicious dish was sent up as a present to Debrisay, and Sleipner was not happy until next morning, when Debrisay came down and thanked him with the old good-humour.

Meantime Ossington had attempted to regain his wife's affections; and Beatrice, for the sake of peace and to keep rumours down, agreed to go with him on a visit to the country.

As we know, it was during their absence that Debrisay was surprised by young Bargarran arriving, hot from his encounter with his father, and announcing that he had been turned out of the house. It was late into the night, indeed, before Debrisay succeeded in quieting him.

Sleipner was hastily informed that Ninian had arrived and wanted to have the suite next Debrisay's. Debrisay would thus be between Ninian and the Ossingtons.

Debrisay was surprised that Ninian, who was already owing him five hundred pounds, should propose to live in such an expensive way.

Sleipner, who was very busy, sent up word to say that he would be charmed to give the young Laird the suite he required, but that it was to be occupied till to-morrow, and that, unluckily, there was not a vacant bed in the entire hotel. Would Mr. Debrisay put up his friend for the night?

Matters were thus arranged, and Debrisay was indeed pleased to have Ninian beside him. He succeeded in at length consoling him; but so restless and feverish was the boy that Debrisay ordered D. P. Slocock to bring the doctor early next morning. About *two* A.M. he felt Ninian getting out of bed. He watched him go to the pocket of his dress-jacket, take out something, kiss it, return to bed with it, and then put it under the pillow.

Debrisay, lying beside him, made no sign that he was awake, but smiled quietly, because he supposed that it was Henriette's portrait

which the boy had brought to bed. He determined to find out the truth in the morning.

Debrisay was half dressed before Ninian awoke, got up, and said he was going to take a cold bath. And, although Debrisay warned him not to aggravate the feverish condition in which he had been lying all night, he was yet glad, when Ninian was out of the room, of the opportunity thus afforded of seeing whose photograph was under the pillow. When, however, he drew out a little portrait not of Henriette, but of Beatrice, he staggered back, hardly able to believe his own eyes. "*He* loves her!" he exclaimed, in a voice broken with amazement and rage. And the memory of such incidents as Ninian's excitement at her ball, his desire to get back to her for the last dance, his perpetual talk about her and yet his silence about any woman with whom he was in love, the breath of her perfume upon him — all this overwhelmed and dazed Debrisay. He heard Ninian returning, however, and had scarcely time to thrust the photograph under the pillow. The boy came back shivering and complaining of a headache. He had caught a chill the day

before, and the night's excitement had induced a fever, which the cold bath had increased. His teeth were chattering.

"By Jove! I'm feeling a bit seedy, Arthur. I'm quite sick," he said.

Debrisay made no reply.

"Look here, old chap, I think I'll just remain in bed for a little longer, if you don't mind. I'm awful sick. By the way, you said the doctor was coming. A good thing too!"

But still Debrisay remained silent.

"Arthur?" said Ninian, getting into bed.

"I want to know," began Debrisay, but stopped, and then began again: "I tell you—I must know——"

"By Jove! What's wrong? I believe you're in a funk," said Ninian, surprised at the altered and very earnest tone of Debrisay's voice.

But at that moment the doctor was admitted. He shook hands with Debrisay and then felt Ninian's pulse. The boy was pronounced to be suffering from a chill, and was ordered to remain in bed at least one whole

day. Meantime Debrisay was breakfasting in the next room. When the doctor had written a prescription and had gone away, Ninian called out :

“Arthur, I ’m going to be a beastly nuisance. He says I ’m to be in bed a whole day. I wish old Sleipner would hurry up and give me those rooms. — Why don’t you answer me, you beggar? Greedy old chap you are, gluttonising in there while I ’m starving.”

Debrisay said nothing, except, “I ’m going out.”

“Arthur,” shouted Ninian. “I wonder if we could get Beatrice to come and see me in here. I ’ve got to tell her about the little girl. By Jove! Good idea. I ’ll tell the chambermaid.”

Ninian heard the door of the sitting-room slam. Debrisay had walked out, hardly knowing what he was going to do.

“He ’s in a deadly funk,” soliloquised Ninian, pulling out Lady Ossington’s photograph. “By Jove! if he had seen this! Beatrice, you don’t care a rap for him, or for Ossington either, do you?”

He then kissed the photograph twenty times and put it under his head again.

The Ossingtons arrived early in the forenoon. On the way from the station Ossington alighted at his club to ask for letters and to read the newspapers. He told Beatrice he would come later. She had been bored to death, and was glad to get back to the Hôtel de Luxe. On arriving she was told by one of the porters that young Bargarran was lying ill in the hotel and desired to speak with her. Debrisay was back in his sitting-room. Beatrice hastily went upstairs, and, without knowing it, suddenly found herself in Debrisay's bedroom. Debrisay simultaneously came through the connecting door, and of course Beatrice was not surprised to see him in what she supposed was the boy's own room. She shook hands with Debrisay almost timidly, and then hurried to the bedside.

"My dear, darling boy!" she said. "Is it possible! What's wrong?"

She then kissed him on the forehead, as she used to do long ago.

"Beatrice! how dare you — how can you —

in my own room—. O God! is every one a liar? Ninian, you are a cheat. You have her photograph beneath your pillow—you kissed it all night. You love her—she loves you!” cried Debrisay, with a note of agony, while Beatrice turned round in consternation.

Her face was flushed as she exclaimed:

“*Your* room! What do you say? I do not—understand.”

“Go—leave me—. It is monstrous—it is unbearable. Ninian, you are a liar!”

“Arthur,” cried the boy, “how dare *you*! What business is it of yours?”

The torrent of words bewildered Beatrice, and she began to move towards the door.

“I don’t understand—. Who brought me here?” she asked, pausing for an explanation, while a blush burned in her cheek. “They told me you were ill, Ninian.”

Meantime Ossington had arrived and had asked Laroche where Lady Ossington was; and when Laroche replied that she was in Mr. Debrisay’s bedroom, Ossington almost struck him, supposing that he was daring to be insolent.

"Her ladyship *is* there," replied Laroche.

"What do you mean?" demanded Osington.

He did not wait for the answer, and went hurriedly along the corridor; but he stopped suddenly and turned pale when he saw Beatrice, covered with confusion and shame, emerging from Debrisay's bedroom.





CHAPTER V

J. C. DALBIAC

OLD Bargarran leaned heavily upon Dalbiac as they mounted the long stair to the Laird's bedroom. Dalbiac put him to bed, wound his watch for him, picked out his gold studs, turned out the pockets, and laid the loose money on the table. Now and again the old man rose with an angry gesture, as if to ask a question, and once he actually got out of bed, as if he meant to go in pursuit of Ninian. Dalbiac, however, quieted him at length, put the lights low, and sat beside him half the night. Finally Bargarran tumbled into a restless sleep, while Dalbiac kept a finger on the old pulse, which was going rapidly indeed. In the moments of waking and turning, Bargarran seemed to suppose that it

was Ninian who was sitting beside him ; and once, as if oblivious of all that had happened, he asked faintly, " Is it you, Nin ? "

Then he put his feverish hand on Dalbiac's head, but having suddenly wakened and seen the pale face and black eyes of the valet, he withdrew his hand, remembered everything in a flash, and cried :

" Oh, *you*—. Yes, I remember—. Oh ! Oh ! "

Dalbiac, whose pallor, owing to two successive sleepless nights, was almost appalling, told the Laird to go to sleep again. It was not yet three in the morning. Bargarran fell back murmuring, and then tossed angrily from side to side.

Dalbiac heard Mrs. McClintock walking about the house and to and fro before Bargarran's door, at which she frequently stopped in order to listen for the old man's breathing. Then she went away sighing, and Dalbiac heard the stifled " Och !— och ! "

She went down to the front door, which she kept unfastened all night in the expectation that Ninian might come back and attempt to get in by means of his latchkey. She even

opened the door, hoping to see him standing on the steps, but each time she closed it with a great sigh.

“Gude help us!” she exclaimed. “Whare’s he gaun?”

When she rose in the morning she ran into Nin’s bedroom, expecting to see him in bed, but when she saw the empty bed she gave a cry. The room was in a state of confusion owing to Slocock’s and Dalbiac’s hurried packing of the boy’s clothes. Mrs. McClintock then prepared herself to hear the worst, and waited anxiously for the Laird. He came tottering down the stairs, and seemed a hundred years old.

“Bargarran! Bargarran!” cried Mrs. McClintock, “can ye thole it? Your ain wee laddie!”

Bargarran, leaning on the balustrade, lifted his hand in rebuke, and warned her never to mention that name. He ordered the bedroom to be shut up, and nothing that was Ninian’s was ever again to pass under Bargarran’s eyes. Even the boy’s portrait was removed from the drawing-room wall, but Mrs. McClintock seized

it furtively and locked it in her packing trunk. She ventured to rebel against the terrible decision which had made Ninian an outcast and Bargarran House desolate in a night.

"You're sweer to dae it. You'll be daft wi' dool ae day, Bargarran!"

Again he warned her sternly not to address him thus, and Mrs. McClintock went below to weep her eyes red for Ninian.

Her trouble was that she was unable to persuade herself that the Laird had been altogether unjustified. The fact that Ninian had decided to keep Henriette another night in the house had filled her with dismay. And one more serious fact, for which, indeed, only Dalbiac was responsible—that is to say, the discovery of the key of Henriette's room in a drawer of Ninian's dressing-table—completely horrified her.

Dalbiac, who had carefully laid the key in that compromising place, came with it to the Laird, who, when he understood what it meant, became for the moment paralysed with indignation. But when the key was supplemented by more authentic discoveries in Ninian's desks

and drawers—such things, for instance, as numerous unpaid bills, papers relating to betting, letters demanding instant payment of accounts long due, love-letters, photographs, trinkets, ribbons, belonging to women who had loved him but whom he had not loved, and, finally, a series of letters threatening blackmail and other terrible forms of civilised persecution, Bargarran, in a fit of rage and horror, pitied himself for having been so long a dupe. Dalbiac brought all these things on a tray. The bills were sorted out and kept, because Bargarran said that his name would require to be rescued from such shame, but all else was immediately burned. A new era had begun in Bargarran House.

Dalbiac seized his chance with some skill. He had been waiting for it, and, indeed, his patience was rewarded sooner than he had expected. He supposed that such a great shock on so old a man might have sudden and serious results. He offered, therefore, his most affectionate services. At first Bargarran made a brave attempt to forget his son, and he allowed only his outraged pride to govern all his

motives. When he heard that Henriette had been Dalbiac's sweetheart, his resentment was so burning hot that if he had met Ninian in the street he would probably have struck him. Each detail brought to light by Dalbiac only confirmed the terrible old man in the belief that Ninian had been justly punished.

So black was the boy painted that even Mrs. McClintock began to ask not justice, but mercy for him from Bargarran. She was unable to forget, for instance, that beneath his pillow she had more than once found that photograph of Lady Ossington which had brought trouble in the Hôtel de Luxe. That Ninian slept with the photograph of a married woman under his pillow appeared to her to be a terrific fact. If he had gone so far astray in such a matter, she was compelled to believe that he might be guilty of many other follies. In spite of it all, however, she was still obstinate enough to throw in a word for him whenever the opportunity offered itself.

Bargarran was now utterly alone. No doubt he had his club, but all his own best friends were over the Border. The only man to whom

he might go for advice was the English lawyer, a stranger, who had drawn the lease of the house in Piccadilly. One of the facts which most irritated the old man was the knowledge that Ninian, at least for the present, was independent of him. Indeed, his own finances, thanks to Ninian, were in no flourishing state, and long before the terrible night on which they separated he had decided to borrow money from his son. That was certainly not possible now. Bargarran had gradually discovered that his expenses seriously overlapped his income. A sudden loss on the stock markets, the failure of a cousin to whom he had lent money, together with the bankruptcy of a Northern shipping company in which he was a director, found him unprepared for any great strain. Already he was handicapped ; and it was not likely that a representative of ancient Highland gentry, conspicuous not for their wealth but for the honour of an ancient name, might be able to hold his own among the gluttons of modern finance whom he found all round him. The premium he had paid on entering the house, the high rent, and the enormous taxes, the

expenses of two establishments, and the hundred other obligations in which he was involved threatened to empty his pockets more quickly than he was able to fill them.

It was thus not until he had been a year and a half in Piccadilly that he began to see the folly of this attempt to live in such a style. Indeed, that journey North which he had abandoned had been undertaken partly with a view to secure the advice of his own lawyer. And now the rupture with Ninian found him exhausted in mind and body and unable to grapple with the difficulties that were menacing him. He went hither and thither attempting to dispose of his lease, but could find no purchaser. In the midst of it all, he was unable to forget the fact that Ninian was his heir, and that no power could deprive the boy of his ultimate rights.

Dalbiac felt that at last something had come within his grasp. Mrs. McClintock began to be afraid of him, because she saw that Bargarran seemed willing to take him into his confidence. He overwhelmed the Laird with attention, and became his companion through-

out the day. He humoured the whims and oddities of an old man in whose company he pretended to find pleasure. It was with a most vivid sense of satisfaction that one day he heard Bargarran address him for the first time as "dear boy."

Simultaneously with the discovery of Ninian's backsliding Bargarran appeared to have discovered a valet who was ready to deny himself everything, or at least a great deal, for the sake of his master. The intimacy between them began to increase in such a way that Mrs. McClintock looked doubtfully towards the future. And when Bargarran warned her one day to be more careful as to the manner in which she addressed Dalbiac, she seemed to see and to feel the beginning of the end. Even yet, however, her old habit of saying bold things to Bargarran had not left her.

"I'm sighin' and sabbin', Bargarran. Whare's your bairn? Ye dinna ken? Gude help us a', wha wad hae thocht it? It maks me greet," she said.

But the day was already past when she might order Dalbiac about with impunity.

Dalbiac's insolence grew apace. There was one thought which burned like a flame in the mind of this extraordinary man : he longed to see those whom he had served compelled in turn to serve him. His entire consciousness was absorbed and dominated by this idea, and it took shape not merely in a vague and general form, but as a series of pictures and suppositions which he hoped to see realised. His sense of his own servitude had been exaggerated from the beginning, and now the desire for a total inversion of relations had seized his imagination. Therefore it did not satisfy him merely to look forward to a time when good-fortune might put him on a level at least as high as the level of his masters.

He remembered with bitterness his own family's fall in the world, and he actually desired to see the day when a Bargarran should serve *him*, be dependent on *his* bounty, and be at *his* beck and call. For instance, no one knows the intense pleasure it gave him to imagine a state of things in which a Bargarran might be compelled to address him as "Sir." This word had burned upon his tongue every

time he had used it. Wherein we observe that little men and great men sometimes resemble each other. For was it not Napoleon who was mightily indignant because the Prince of the Asturias had not addressed him as "Sire," and never rested till the full tone of the word "Majesty" was sounding in his ears?

In his own way J. C. Dalbiac desired the homage of those to whom he had given homage too long. He would have sacrificed much to be able to order Ninian hither and thither as Ninian had ordered him, or to see him brushing clothes, pulling boots off, preparing a bath, counting linen, fulfilling, in short, the hundred menial duties which had fallen to Dalbiac's own lot. He was aware, indeed, that the downfall of the Bargarrans might not be the luckiest event for his own prospects, and he was thus in a state of irresolution between the satisfaction which their misfortune would give him and the fear lest it might involve his own.

His first determination was to discard the hated livery as soon as possible, and already

he began to make tentative suggestions to Bargarran. One circumstance was immediately favourable to his project. The Laird's eyesight was failing with almost startling rapidity; indeed, the recent shock of Ninian's departure had revealed and hastened the frailties of age which had now accumulated upon him. Thus, many of the letters which Ninian should have read aloud to him lay unopened and unanswered.

It occurred to Dalbiac that, if he proposed himself as secretary and amanuensis, he might have occasion to be instructed and amused. He had already formed his own suspicions about the real state of Bargarran's affairs, and his curiosity was not to be easily stifled.

One morning, therefore, after he had watched the old man fumbling ineffectually among his letters for a quarter of an hour, Dalbiac suggested that he should be allowed to read them for him. Indeed, Bargarran held the letters so near his eyes that his eyelashes almost touched the paper; and yet even *then* he seemed to have only a vague and floundering

sense of their contents. To Dalbiac's great delight Bargarran acquiesced, and put up his hand to his ear in order to listen better; but when Dalbiac began to read a letter which was couched in threatening terms, the writer of which demanded instant payment of the interest so long overdue, or else the immediate restitution of the loan, Bargarran, dropping his hand instantly, cried :

“ Ah yes — you need not — that will do ! ”

Dalbiac, who was much surprised, lifted another, and began to read a succinct and almost insolent refusal to advance any money whatever to Bargarran.

Dalbiac stopped and looked at the old man, and asked himself whether, after all, there seemed to be much difference between the father and the son.

Bargarran covered his face and sank in shame and confusion in his chair.

“ Enough — enough ! ” exclaimed the Laird.
“ It is very unfortunate ! ”

And all at once Dalbiac began to think of rats' policy, because it was apparently time to leave this tottering building.

Presently, however, he became interested in one other strange feature of Bargarran's collapse.

The Laird began to suffer from religious depression. His worldly affairs were agitating him too much. He felt that his pride and the desire to lift his name in the world were being visited by providential punishment, and that these distresses were of the nature of warnings and judgments. It was not for nothing that his forefathers had shaped their lives on the sternest of creeds. Ninian's backsliding, the accumulation of debt, and the infirmities of old age began to appear in the exaggerated light of a retribution. The old man attempted to humble and to console himself by a return to the Scriptures. Dalbiac never put him to bed without being required to read aloud a long chapter of the Bible. Then Bargarran would ask him to leave the room, but at the door Dalbiac generally listened to a loud, fervent prayer, in which Ninian's name was often mentioned. The contrast between this apparent desire for reconciliation and the Laird's stern demeanour during the day whenever the boy's

name was mentioned astonished and amused Dalbiac.

But when Bargarran actually began to humble himself before his valet, the point of Dalbiac's excitement was at last reached. Had the Laird been twenty years younger, doubtless he would have shown a more vigorous front towards these troubles ; but the moral and the physical dissolution were, as they sometimes are, simultaneous. Bargarran asked Dalbiac to forgive him if he had been guilty of any harsh or haughty treatment. The sense of equality began to grow between them, and Dalbiac looked on amazed. The Laird repeated certain passages of Scripture fitted to remind him of the folly of pride and the vanity of high place :

“ ‘ If any man desire to be first,’ he said, ‘ the same shall be last of all and servant of all ! ’ ”

Dalbiac agreed.

“ ‘ And, whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased ! ’ ” continued the Laird.

It had become an intense pleasure to him to rebuke himself even in the presence of his servant.

“ ‘Whosoever of you will be chiefest,’ he repeated solemnly, ‘shall be servant of all.’ ”

Not content with these merely verbal admonitions, he seemed determined to put his pride to the test and to choose Dalbiac as the rod of humiliation for himself. These literal interpretations were working havoc with his sense of dignity, and The Bargarran, in the lonely horror that was creeping upon him, seemed to invite insult. The fact that Dalbiac’s father had been a gentleman—as Dalbiac, indeed, never lost an opportunity of declaring—made the old man still more eager to offer amends. Every day Dalbiac felt an increase of power, and he was on the verge of intoxication by it.

“*Sacr*—. Am I not as good as they are!” he exclaimed, as his excitement rose.

“Make me your secretary, Bargarran,” said Dalbiac one day.

The Laird looked at him, startled to hear his name thus pronounced by the man who was in his livery. No doubt Mrs. McClintock addressed him in this way, but in *her* mouth the name meant devotion and loyalty. Bar-

garran felt in a moment, however, that the tone in which Dalbiac spoke meant both authority and contempt. In a series of evasive suggestions he had informed Dalbiac that for the moment he was pressed for money ; but, since the reading of the letters, Dalbiac had, of course, the whole secret in his hands.

Bargarran, in short, was already heavily overdrawn at his bankers'. There was now the urgent matter of a loan needed to pay interest on loans already made. That day nothing less than £100 would do ; and, afraid to renew his attempt in the City or among money-lenders, Bargarran at length confided his need in the ear of his servant. Long ago Dalbiac had told him that he had saved £200 in tips, and Bargarran had commended him for his thrift. But it was that money which the old man now craved. Dalbiac shot a glance at Bargarran, whose eyes sought the ground.

"*Sacr*— Yes," cried Dalbiac, "but this livery shall come off. And if I lend you money, I'll sit at your table, Bargarran !"

The old man looked at him appealingly, and

the inversion of their relations was an accomplished fact.

They were in Bargarran's bedroom, and Dalbiac began to divest himself of his livery. He flung waistcoat and jacket on the floor and kicked at the buttons.

Bargarran, too anxious for the loan, forgave these injuries, and began to question his former servant whether, besides, he knew how to raise a considerable sum of money.

Dalbiac replied that he did happen to know where it might be got, but that he would get it only on condition that he shared in the spending of it.

Bargarran agreed, and inquired to whom Dalbiac intended to go.

"I know a man who might lend you money," replied Dalbiac. "His name is Sleipner."

"Will you go to him to-day?" asked Bargarran, eagerly.

Dalbiac nodded, and left the room to choose the best-fitting among the absolutely new suits of clothes which Ninian had left behind. He and Ninian were of the same breadth and height, and their legs were equally slim, so

that when Dalbiac came back the Laird was surprised to see him dressed like a gentleman and looking superb.

“One word,” said Bargarran, who had spent the interval with his face buried in his hands: “Only be kind to my housekeeper, who has been with me forty years. She must remain.”

“I’ll get one of the boys from the Hôtel de Luxe to be *our* servant,” said Dalbiac, lighting a cigar and going out.

When Mrs. McClintock heard of the revolution which had taken place, she lifted her hands in excitement. That the man who a few moments ago was in livery should now be master in the house, that she would require to bend and bow to him, and make his bed, and brush his boots, seemed intolerable and not to be believed. She went up to Bargarran, whom she found sitting dazed in his room.

“Wae’s me, Bargarran, for ye hang your pow sae laigh!” she said. “Weel wad I like to tak’ ye awa’. We’ve been owre lang frae the moorlan’. Ye’re in flinders, Bargarran! What’s wrang? Whare’s Maister Nin?”

Wha 's this cad that 's got haud o' ye? Flee hame! Flee hame, Bargarran! D' ye say that skellum maun eat and drink wi' sic as ye?"

"Hush, Mary, hush!" said Bargarran, waving her off.

"The tear's in your ee. Is there nane 'll help ye ava? Will ye gae wi' me, Bargarran?"

But he told her to "bide a wee" and keep her tongue quiet.

"Remember the patience of Job, Mary," said Bargarran.

"Och! and the wee laddie? Whare 's Maister Nin? Ye 'll repent it ae day, Bargarran!" she continued.

He waved her away again, because her words terrified him.

Behold, therefore, Dalbiac sitting at the table at which he had served, and drinking Bargarran's wine and calling for a health. A senile smile broke over the face of the old man as he raised a tottering glass and endeavoured to comprehend this new relationship.

Dalbiac, indeed, was thoroughly happy. He promised the immediate loan of £100, and the

aid of Sleipner, who had agreed to come and to confer with the Laird.

“But you ’ll give me security, Bargarran. I ’ll have your horse and brougham—. *Sacr*—I love a horse and good wine—hey, old boy!—and a girl, too. But none of your Henriettes! No Mademoiselle Tillinac! Ha! I leave her to others, Bargarran,” said Dalbiac, calling upon the Laird to be jolly.

He continued to drink heavily and to order about the youth whose services he had secured.

“Valet!” he cried. “Waiter! valet! Confound you, come at once when I call you! I’ve stained my shirt with wine—bring me another—hey, ho!—and be quick. Valet! valet!”

He wore an evening suit which fitted him like a glove, and he had a ring on his finger, although Bargarran had never seen it before, and money was heard jingling in his pockets.

“You ’re not drinking, Bargarran!” he cried.

Bargarran looked at him in horror.

“Call me ‘sir.’ Go on, there—old swindler—debtor—call me ‘sir.’”

Bargarran withdrew from the table, terrified, and left him to finish the wine.

Next morning Dalbiac opened two of Bargarran's letters and read aloud renewed threats and demands for payment.

"Confound 'em ! we 'll fight 'em, Bargarran," said Dalbiac, and then went to Ninian's bedroom, which he was now occupying.

Shortly afterwards Bargarran followed him, and, to his great surprise, he discovered the ex-valet dressed in a riding suit and patent-leather riding-boots.

"*Hein !*" said Dalbiac, while Bargarran stared, "my grandfather had horses at Auteuil. I can ride—. I love a horse—. Look ! there 's a leg, Bargarran. I 've ordered your mare—mine now, I think. Ha ! ha ! I like the look of her paces—. Come into the Row and see how she moves."

Bargarran smiled feebly, feigning delight and acquiescence, and then ventured again to beg for the hundred pounds.

"When I come back," said Dalbiac, making a riding-whip whiz in the air.

The mare was brought to the door, and,

while Dalbiac mounted, Bargarran peered behind the curtains.

As soon as the ex-valet had ridden away, Mrs. McClintock came up again to relieve herself of excitement.

“What mak’s ye start, Bargarran?” she exclaimed in horror as the old man threw his hands wildly over his head. “I canna thole it. Are we a’ red-wud? Hae ye nae siller mair? Gin ye hang your auld heid sae laigh, I’ll greet. Bargarran, Bargarran! to see ye in sic a gate! Och! it’s shamefu’!”

Bargarran, however, sat silent in a heap in the chair.

Dalbiac came back in a rage because the mare had been restive and had given him trouble. The Park had been muddy, and his boots were bespattered. Bargarran met him, and asked if he had had a nice ride, but Dalbiac swore and said no. Again Bargarran ventured to ask for the money, because, unless it were forthcoming in twenty-four hours, he would receive a summons.

“Get me the boot-jack first,” said Dalbiac; “or no—pull these boots off.”

Bargarran, hardly able to believe his ears, looked at him full in the face, while the word "scoundrel" was forming on his lips. Dalbiac burst into a loud laugh, reminded him of the passages in Scripture about masters and servants, and ended up by smacking fingers and saying: "Well, no loan!" whereupon Bargarran knelt down and pulled off the boots. Then Dalbiac, with a bad grace, threw him the cheque.

"And your friend?" asked Bargarran, eagerly, as if his anxiety had already made him forget insults. "Is he coming to-night?"

"Yes, yes, Sleipner's coming to-night," he replied. "And a sharp devil he is, I may tell you!"

That night, by appointment with Dalbiac, Sleipner came to Bargarran House. Sleipner was sufficiently amazed at Dalbiac's strides in the world. The ex-valet, indeed, who was in evening dress and lounging in an arm-chair in the library and smoking a cigar, advanced to meet his former master, whom he welcomed in the grand manner.

"When I ring," said Dalbiac to the youth who had superseded him, "bring port—that's your favourite drink, is it not, Sleipner?"

Sleipner nodded, much amused.

"And three glasses," added Dalbiac.

"*Hein!*" exclaimed Sleipner, looking round the room, "and you've got as far as this! Well, my dear Dalbiac, did n't I tell you to tickle them with flattery as with a feather?"

"By Jove! I've been tarring 'em with another brush," retorted Dalbiac. "Have a cigar?"

After he had pulled out his cuffs so that the gold sleeve-links might be seen, he asked Sleipner eagerly what young Bargarran was doing in the Hôtel de Luxe.

"Yes, yes," replied Sleipner, "in *time*. But first, what are *you* doing in this excellent Hôtel de Bargarran?"

"I'm secretary here," said Dalbiac; "and mind you, Sleip, you must make this loan easy for us—interest to be on a Christian scale, you know. The old fellow has plenty behind him, plenty of land, a great shooting. I've been there, and I mean to go again.

But meantime he's in a fix, and, being pious, will pay you all right. Truth is, I think he's a bit cracked, and not half as badly off as he thinks. Anyway, don't make it more than six, eh?"

Sleipner laughed.

"*Hein!*" he said, "*hein!*" and looked round the room again. "It's a fine house. The young fool should have been happier here than in the three stuffy rooms I've given him. Eating his heart out for the same woman Debrisay loves. Joke of the whole place. *Such* a mystery of a woman!"

"Lady Ossington?" asked Dalbiac, and Sleipner nodded.

"How do you know?" asked Sleipner.

"We used to find her photograph under his pillow some mornings," replied Dalbiac.

"*Such* a mystery of a woman!" said Sleipner again. "No one knows her, no one knows what she's up to or whom she loves; as beautiful as a marble pillar, and as cold—and as cold."

Dalbiac then inquired once more about young Bargarran, and Sleipner said that he

was running up enormous bills, and apparently quarrelling with his friends.

"Yes, Laroche told me," said Dalbiac.

"So! So you know my gossip, too?" exclaimed Sleipner.

"All of it except one thing."

"And what's that?" asked Sleipner.

"Have you heard of a certain Mademoiselle Tillinac, a thing with a pale face, black, uncomfortable-looking hair—a confounded itchy thing it used to be in my face," said Dalbiac.

"*Tiens!*" exclaimed Sleipner, throwing the ash of his cigar successfully in a mass on to the hearth. "That must have been—wait a minute. Yes, a *demi-mondaine* did present herself, and asked for young Bargarran; wanted a place in the hotel, it seems, wanted to be his chambermaid, no doubt—ha, ha, ha! but I said, 'No, no! get on with you. We allow much, we wink at much, but we must stop somewhere!'"

"So he has n't got her?" asked Dalbiac.

"How the devil do I know?" demanded Sleipner. "I don't follow him when he goes out."

"Ah, well—all right," said Dalbiac; "it's all one to me. Does he know I'm his father's secretary now?"

Sleipner said *he* knew nothing about it.

"Tell The Bargarran we're waiting," said Dalbiac to the youth who brought the wine.

"And so it's a bad case?" asked Sleipner.

"No, no; a matter of fifteen hundred pounds—good enough security—but he's desperate for the money—wait," said Dalbiac, listening. "S-sh!—here he comes."

Old Bargarran opened the door and came almost furtively in. The strong light fell violently on his mass of white hair, and his eyes were seen to be flashing with the last flashes of their rage and pride. Indeed, his demeanour was a strange combination of urbanity and contempt.

"This is your friend?" he said in no strong voice.

Sleipner bowed, and noticed a faint blush overspreading the old man's face.

Bargarran was a poor bargain-maker, as every proud man is. Instead of seizing for his own advantage the sudden turns in a trans-

action, he was busy wondering how far his own dignity was at stake.

But, to Dalbiac's surprise, he attempted at first to be actually gay. It was the last flicker of his vanity.

"These little accidents," said Bargarran, pulling his beard and laughing in it, "do happen now and again. My cousin — well, he has not paid up as I expected, and I have had other losses — this, that, and the other thing, you know. Well, I'm just a little short — eighteen hundred pounds would do it."

"That's three more than *you* said," remarked Sleipner, turning to Dalbiac, who smiled and nodded back.

"And your security, sir?" asked Sleipner.

Bargarran looked at him as if the question were an insult. He then said, looking at Dalbiac :

"My val — my secretary, Mr. Dalbiac, will let you know that I belong to an honourable and ancient house, sir, whose word has ever been as good as its bond."

"Your son, sir," retorted Sleipner, "who I presume belongs to the same ancient and hon-

ourable house, is running up large bills in my hotel, and I am beginning to think that his word and his bond are about equally worthless!"

Bargarran's face suddenly changed its expression and he looked at Dalbiac.

"You did not tell me," he said, "that this gentleman ——"

He then faltered and murmured something inaudible.

"My good name, sir," he then said to Sleipner, "I pledge my good name, which, although my son has stained it, is still my good name."

"Pardon me," replied Sleipner, "I do not say your son has stained it. He is a very charming young man, beloved by every one,—only a little extravagant."

Bargarran bowed his old bewildered head.

"But, sir," continued Sleipner, "contracts drawn in bad names with good security are more prized than those drawn in good names with bad security."

"Tell my son," said Bargarran in confusion, "that if he comes back and asks my pardon, I will pay his debts."

Dalbiac started, and Bargarran and Sleipner both looked at him.

"Nothing," said Dalbiac, and continued to smoke.

"No," said Sleipner, "that's no business of mine, if you please. But I am not unwilling to lend you *fifteen* hundred pounds, provided you cede your shootings and your deer forest to me this season!"

"They are valued at three thousand five hundred!" exclaimed Bargarran.

"Oh, but they might not *let*," suggested Sleipner, "and I should have such a slump in stags and grouse."

"Do you happen to know, sir," asked Bargarran, "the enormous expenses of a deer forest? It takes twenty-five acres annually to feed a stag, and he is not shootable until he is at least five years old."

A long discussion followed, during which Dalbiac, who had been listening in silence and admiring Sleipner, poured out the wine.

"An admirable wine, sir," said Sleipner, raising a glass to the Laird; "it has that quality like plush, which I always demand from any

wine which seeks the hospitality of the human tongue. That phrase, I may tell you, and the 'plush,' too, came from my friend the Marquis of Dellairs, with whom I had the pleasure of travelling between Tunis and Malta—a *drôle* phrase, a *drôle* Marquis, but most excellent company."

"I have never eaten plush," said Bargarran, rising and walking about.

"The man has no *esprit*," whispered Sleipner to Dalbiac. "He is gross!"

Bargarran returned in his steps again, stood opposite Sleipner, and reverted to the bargain. Sleipner knew by the insistence of look and tone and gesture that the old fingers were itchy for at least fifteen hundred pounds. He suggested that Dalbiac might draw out a provisional agreement to let them see how it looked, and repeated that after all it was a fair bargain, since he might not find a tenant for the shootings.

"Mind you," said Dalbiac, looking at them both, and preparing to write the agreement, "I get a commission on this."

Sleipner burst out laughing, while a cold

sweat overran Bargarran. But the immediate bait of fifteen hundred pounds excited and allured him.

"The house to go with the shootings. I mean the house up there," said Sleipner.

"I've put that in," answered Dalbiac.

The little document was ready, and Bargarran looked at it and signed it hastily.

"The lawyers will draw out a more formal deed upon this one as a basis," said Sleipner; "but I have no objections to believe in the *bona fides* of this one, and so I shall send you the money to-morrow."

Sleipner, accompanied by Dalbiac, took his leave; and Bargarran went exhausted to bed, saying to himself: "He will be telling Ninian!"

Within twenty-four hours Bargarran received Sleipner's cheque, and within two days the formal business was settled. The money made the old man happy for the moment; but he made no sign of returning Dalbiac's hundred pounds, and Dalbiac began to hint his impatience. The Laird, however, asked the use of it for the next six months. With a grum-

bling grace Dalbiac agreed, but, by way of compensation, he plunged still more recklessly into the rights and pleasures of his new position.

In any case, it was not possible for Bargarran to get rid of him. He had been the means of obtaining Sleipner's loan, and the Laird did not know how far the two men were working together. Therefore he attempted to conciliate Dalbiac, although he felt so much that was sinister about him.

The old man was on the last steps of life, and he found them dark and insecure. The loss of Ninian, and the sorrow and indignation which had followed it, were hastening his collapse. Dalbiac had become indispensable, and the Laird actually required his physical assistance whenever it was necessary to mount a stair. His correspondence now passed entirely into the hands of the ex-valet, who promised to fight the Laird's enemies.

Dalbiac rejoiced in this curious opportunity of seeing into the mechanism of family life. It was now no longer Bargarran who judged which letters should be read aloud. The man who had to answer them required to read them.

Thus, a host of details regarding the Northern home came into Dalbiac's knowledge, and he decided to go thither at the end of summer.

Sleipner would no doubt arrange something pleasant for him. Dalbiac, indeed, obeying a sudden instinct of shrewdness, began to see that Bargarran's interests and his own were now intermixed. Ignorant of the precise relations in which Ninian stood as heir, he determined to find out all about it, and his position as Bargarran's secretary would facilitate his inquiries.

Meantime he gave the Laird advice and drove off creditors with skill. The advent of power, however, had intoxicated him. Now and again Bargarran seemed to forget these altered circumstances, and once actually addressed Dalbiac in the old manner, and ordered him to bring his boots, forsooth. Dalbiac suddenly turned upon him and asked him what the devil he meant. Then Bargarran begged his pardon and went silently away. Such incidents made him ask himself where the situation might end. He remembered the warnings of Mrs. McClintock, who, indeed,

was now seldom seen. She remained below, waiting events and afraid lest a sudden word might cause her to be packed into the streets. It was only when Dalbiac went out that she ventured to steal up and to console Bargarran. But when she said again, "Flee hame!" he, dropping into her own dialect, whispered: "I've nae hame to flee to, Mary!" When she understood that the old Northern house had been given up to a stranger, and that she could not get back that autumn, she began to weep and to upbraid Bargarran. Such a thing had never happened in the family's history, and a Bargarran who had surrendered the old moorland must be in trouble indeed. She so terrified the Laird by her evil prophesying that he ordered her not to disturb him.

"Wha wad hae thocht it!" she exclaimed, deaf to his entreaties. "That flunkie takin' his meals wi' sic as ye! Och, we've been owre lang awa'! Ye've nae hame, Bargarran?"

"Leave me my lane, Mary," said Bargarran. "Ye hae aye had a tongue that wagged."

He began to think of Ninian again. At least Ninian was his son, and a wicked son

was no worse than a wicked stranger, and deserved a better chance. He was afraid, however, of a repulse. His old pride was not yet broken, and he told himself it was his son's duty to come to him. Yet, unknown to Dalbiac, he went into Piccadilly now and again in the hope of seeing Ninian. A vague longing for contact with his own flesh and blood was moving him, and one night he went out half determined to go to the Hôtel de Luxe. He passed the great lighted building, however, and came back, peering into every face. Whether his son were saint or sinner, Bargarran longed to see him now. It was between *eleven* and *twelve*, and to his horror he saw Dalbiac walking with two women. Bargarran crossed the street and watched them going into St. James's restaurant. In the blaze of light he hoped to see Ninian, but he waited in vain, and then walked back, and stood near the railings of the Green Park to watch the endless night traffic. He was now opposite Devonshire House, and the little blind beggar who had been standing against its walls all day was waiting at the pavement edge opposite for

some one to help him across. Suddenly a tall youth came up to the blind man, took his arm, and went straight across to where Bargarran was standing. It was Ninian. When Bargarran recognised him he began to tremble with joy, but also with vague agony. From his earliest youth the boy had shown the strongest love for all weak and helpless things. As soon as Ninian came into the full light of the huge electric lamp Bargarran was ready to fall upon his neck.

“Ninian! — Ninian! — my son! —” he exclaimed.

This sudden apparition of the old, bent, familiar figure and the old white head startled Ninian. Alas! Ninian was not yet ready for reconciliation. He gave his father a cold stare and crossed the street again, while the blind beggar tapped his way along the pavement.

Bargarran tottered against the railings, and then, having gathered himself together, went down to his house, muttering soft reproaches. He sank down on his chair and wept.

"He may be justified—" he murmured.
"He was kinder to that beggar than to me.
O Ninian!—O Nin!—Nin!"

He sat up till two in the morning struggling with his rage and grief. Then he heard Dalbiac coming in by means of the latchkey Ninian used of old. Suddenly the old wild anger burst out in Bargarran, and in a loud, startling voice he summoned Dalbiac to him. He seemed to shake off in an instant the nightmare of humiliation.

"Villain!" he cried; "*you* who have put me against my son—!"

"Take care, old boy," said Dalbiac, reeling into the room. "Whatsh up?— Get my slippers—you old money thief!— Where's my money?—"

Bargarran avoided him and escaped from the room, and tottered up to his bed, repeating:

"I'll go to Nin! I'll go to Nin!"



CHAPTER VI

NINIAN, DEBRISAY, AND LADY OSSINGTON

IT was certainly unfortunate, and in the end it was disastrous, for Henriette that she presented herself at the Hôtel de Luxe at the moment when Ninian and Lady Ossington were unable to see her. She asked for young Bargarran, and the porter looked suspectingly at her and then smiled in a dubious way. When Henriette persisted in asking admission and began to be excited in case of a refusal, the man only pushed her back and told her to go away. Thereupon she mentioned Lady Ossington's name, and the porter became gentler and asked her to stand in the vestibule. He demanded her name, and then sent it up to Lady Ossington ; but it was the moment when Beatrice had left Ninian in Debrisay's bed-

room, and such was her agitation that, even although her most intimate friends had called upon her, it is not likely she would have consented to see them. When, therefore, the name of a Mademoiselle Tillinac was announced, Lady Ossington shook her head and said she did not know the person and had no desire to see her.

Henriette was summarily bidden to depart. Again she demanded to see young Bargarran, and the porter told her that he was ill. She seemed dissatisfied and even agitated, and presently was weeping. Then Sleipner was informed, and he came and asked her sharply what she wanted.' This was the event which he recounted afterwards to Dalbiac. He saw at a glance that she was French, and he addressed her in that language.

"Monsieur told me to come," insisted Henriette.

"Oh, did he?" retorted Sleipner. "Get off! —Go on!"

"But, monsieur!" exclaimed Henriette, "he did say that Lady Ossington would see me."

"She has already said she does not know anything about you," replied Sleipner.

"But I *must* see dem," said Henriette.

"Well," replied Sleipner, "Monsieur de Barragan should have taken private rooms, and not come here. Pfui!—Now go on."

"He did say there might be a place for me here," implored Henriette.

"Ha! ha! as his chambermaid!" retorted Sleipner.

Henriette went away blushing and covered with derision. She heard the men laughing behind her back, and a sudden rage against the injustice and her ill-fortune seized her. An hour later, however, she was bold enough to present herself again in the hopes of seeing Ninian moving among the gay crowd, but she was driven from the door and warned that she might be given up to a policeman. She lingered at the door, but no Ninian came. She must now tramp the streets again. She knew it must be a choice at last between the river and the streets. As dusk fell she went down Piccadilly and into the Green Park, where she sat down and wept bitterly.

Meantime there existed only a state of extraordinary confusion and suspicion between the four persons whom fate had brought together in the Hôtel de Luxe. Ossington, for instance, received his wife's explanations with indignation. He refused to believe a word she said. And, indeed, it was precisely this fact which made Beatrice gather herself together, and helped her to see the situation in a humorous light. It was not long before she was exasperating Ossington by smiling over it all.

"You will not listen!" she said. "Ninian was lying in Mr. Debrisay's bedroom. How he came there I don't know. They told me he was ill, but I confess he did n't look very ill. Ask Sleipner. Ask *any one* but me."

Her contemptuous smile, followed by a ripple of laughter, aggravated Ossington's ill-temper. And when he renewed his old demand, and asked if she would consent to leave the Hôtel de Luxe instantly, she said that was puerile.

"I never knew," she said, staring at him, "that men could be so hysterical."

The truth was that it was not Ossington's fury that disturbed her at all; but she was vexed to know that Arthur actually supposed that she was in love with the boy.

"Good gracious! I used to have him on my knee!"

She had been bewildered by the sudden revelation of Ninian's infatuation; and as soon as the opportunity presented itself she locked herself in her own room and wrote this letter to Debrisay:

"DEAR ARTHUR,

"You are exciting yourself about *nothing*. Send that ridiculous boy to me, and I shall cuff his ears. The whole thing is so amusing that I hope by this time you are laughing, as I am.

"*Yours,*

"BEATRICE."

If anything might soothe the stormy soul of Debrisay it was this letter; but when he looked at it again, and saw that "*Yours*" was underlined, he became suddenly exultant. It

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 177

was the first sign he had had for many a day of her old *finesse*. He pitied Ninian and Ossington. The dreadful reality of her love for him, long waited for, came breaking at last over him like a phantasmagoria.

Meantime Ninian was already asking to be forgiven. He never denied the immense influence Debrisay had upon him. He called him to the bedside and said: "Arthur, I'm a beast!" He remembered that he was lying in Debrisay's bed, that he was owing Debrisay money, that, above all, his own affection for Debrisay was as strong as ever. He might have known that such a sudden surprise would have the effect of a shock on the big, steadfast man. As yet Beatrice's letter had not reached Debrisay, who was at war with himself and the whole world. He went, however, to the boy's bedside.

"Arthur," said Ninian, "I could n't help it. It's horribly silly. Ever since I danced with her that night I've been in love with her. You remember the perfume. It made me drunk, too. I'm going away, old boy."

"Nin," said Debrisay, "let's both go. Curse

women ! Let 's go and travel. There 's something fatal in her—I don't understand her—I never did. Nin, forgive me everything I said, will you ? That woman has ruined me—. I must give it up."

" By Jove, Arthur ! All right. I 'll come with you," said Ninian. " Anyway, I 'm going to get up out of this."


" Nin," said Debrisay, reverting, in spite of himself, to what fascinated and allured him, " tell me—did she—give you the slightest—justification for believing that she loved you ?"

" I 'm hanged if she did—I 'm a silly fool ! She loves me no more than she loves you. And, in any case, where does that idiot Ossington come in ?" asked Ninian.

Debrisay smiled and said :

" Sleipner once said to me, ' Ossington is a round O, and nothing else !' "

Then came, unseen by Ninian, that little letter of Beatrice which brought back to Debrisay the full surprise of love. It was like hot fuel taking new life by the discovery within itself of something still inexhaustible and more iridescent. The next time Ninian asked when



Debrisay intended to pack up, Debrisay replied that he had decided *not* to go till the end of the season.

Ninian looked at him, and seemed to detect a change.

"Oh, then, I'll stay, too," he said.

A long and exhausting passion was still before each of them.

"In fact," said Sleipner, "between the three men there is going on what Bismarck would have called a triangular duel."

Sleipner was delighted. The arrival of young Bargarran meant that the suite next Debrisay's would be occupied till the end of the season. It was only, indeed, a few weeks later that he began to look upon Ninian as a doubtful client. However, he was made happy as soon as he held the Bargarran shootings—a security sufficient to be sure, to cover the double debt.

The arrival of Ninian at the Hôtel de Luxe had the most important results for others besides Sleipner. It was arranged that the room which divided his and Debrisay's suites should be held in common between them. It was in it that their friendship came near being

wrecked, and it was in it, too, that all Ossington's suspicions concentrated.

How the foolish letters which Ninian began to write to Beatrice fell into Ossington's hands was doubtless best known to Laroche. At any rate, Ninian would have been surprised if he had been able to see Ossington read sheet after amorous sheet. "I have a devil for a wife!" exclaimed Ossington, as he endeavoured to fathom this new mystery. Whether Ninian was being used by her as the foil for Debrisay, or whether it was Debrisay who was to be the foil for Ninian, was the latest enigma which faced the distracted man. When at length he found out that Beatrice had spoken the truth, and that young Bargarran had actually been ill and lying in Debrisay's bed, he was amazed at her cunning. Beatrice, aware that the letters were disappearing, began to lay them in places in which her husband would be most likely to find them. It was this double deceit which aggravated the puzzle of her infidelity. What depth of passion lay beneath her apparently unimpassioned soul was perhaps not known even to herself; but at least

she knew that at the moment when Ossington began to suppose that he had been upon a wrong track, and that Debrisay was less harmless than he seemed, and as much her dupe as himself perhaps, nothing now would satisfy her except Debrisay's love. She had begun to think of a divorce. "I shall ask him straight for it," she said. But the summer was passing, and there was no loosening of the deadlock. She envied Ninian. That he was able to sit hour after hour with the man she loved filled her with jealousy and made her ill with longing. What would she not have given for a few moments in which to hear from his own lips the pardon which her soul craved! The excitement of those weeks, the horror of discovery, and the bewildering cross-lights of suspicion exhausted her. The human heart seems to be able to face with courage "yes" or "no," even when they are hostile to it, but what it abhors is the vacuum of uncertainty. Now, not a single letter came from Debrisay. What was he thinking about? she wondered. Did he despise her at last? Was he obeying her first request not to write at all? Or was

he guilty at length of that cruel ruse of lovers who, in order to quicken longing, torture and test the beloved by long silences?

• On the other hand, Ossington was not at all convinced. His wife's ridicule of Ninian's infatuation might be genuine, or it might be simulated. There is nothing so maddening as human conduct which invites conjectures that destroy each other. "I rather agree with your lordship," said Sleipner. "The thing has now become kaleidoscopic."

As yet, indeed, there was no damaging evidence against Beatrice. She aggravated Ossington by her silence; and such is the riddle of human conduct that Ossington was actually driven to desire proof of his wife's lapse. He wished to create temptation as a touchstone for her character. Beatrice knew it. As yet he had said nothing about Ninian's letter, and she was not surprised when he told her to invite the boy into their rooms. At the last moment, when the truth might stand revealed, he would — Well, as yet his mind was only dazzled and confused by the idea of an atrocious crime.

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 183

When Beatrice consented with alacrity, and said, laughing, that she would send the silly boy home to his father, Ossington looked at her and was almost constrained to admire her subtlety. She kept his mind going zigzag between Ninian and Debrisay. And all the time a horrible crime was shaping itself within him. The time was long past when he desired to make his wife's name scandalous in a public trial, and the time was come when he hoped to assuage his wounded vanity by some more primitive and personal form of vengeance. On the other hand, Debrisay had become calmer. The news that Ninian had been invited to take tea with Lady Ossington did not trouble his jealousy. Instinctively he felt assured. He had already become aware that he was the real centre of the group, and that in his hands lay the chances of happiness or misery for each of them. Whenever he saw Ossington or looked at Ninian, with whom he was in daily contact, the fact that Beatrice was his, and only his, seemed almost appalling to him. It was not even necessary for him to see her to feel convinced that she had returned at last in haste to

the first love. The great day of their meeting might still be far off, but he knew that it was coming. Yet he desired to play a decent part, and began to upbraid himself that by his persistence he was the cause of whatever tragedy might be approaching them. At any rate, Ninian's so-called affection for Beatrice was not to be compared with the long and exhausting fidelity of which Debrisay was conscious.

Blushing, and looking very handsome, Ninian knocked for admittance at Beatrice's door, and was received in a peal of her laughter. He turned crimson and looked angry, but was glad that Ossington was nowhere visible.

"Well," said Beatrice, "you are a very foolish boy. My dear Ninian, do you know *that*? I am going to send you home to your poor old father. It is shocking that you have deserted him. Do you know *that*? I'm going to see him about you."

"By Jove, Beatrice!" replied Ninian, quickly; "you're going to do nothing of the kind. I won't go home, that's all. If you knew what I have had to stand from him; but—but—if I'm near you, Beatrice——"

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 185

"I hear you are very extravagant," she said, interrupting him; "it is silly of you living here. You are getting into debt."

Ossington came in at that moment, and found Ninian covered with blushes and looking extraordinarily awkward.

"I've been giving him a lecture, George," said Beatrice, while Ossington, with a villainous smile, shook hands with the boy.

"Oh, indeed!" he said dryly. "I see."

In fact, Ossington seemed to embarrass Ninian, and the boy could not be persuaded to stay. He went out hastily and awkwardly, cursing Ossington for having arrived. Not even Beatrice's "Why are you going away?" detained him.

"I hear," said Beatrice, "that he is not paying his bills."

But Ossington paid no attention, and went out immediately.

"Your lordship is right," said Sleipner, to whom he had come. "I happened to be at Bargarran House last night. You know the young fellow has had a dreadful quarrel with his father. But that's not the point. You

told me to give you any hints that dropped my way. Well, their valet, Dalbiac, told me that Lady Ossington's photograph used often to be found under young Bargarran's pillow."

Ossington took a long breath and turned as pale as plaster.

"It is extraordinary how blind we have all been," added Sleipner. "But I have more news. The Bargarrans are in no flourishing state. The old man has placed his shootings in my hands in the hope that I may be able to find some one to rent them this season. Well, it is about time it was settled. We are at the end of July. Does your lordship by any chance wish to rent a shooting this season?"

Sleipner had asked this question ironically, and never supposed for a moment that Ossington would consider it seriously. As a matter of fact, Sleipner had decided to offer the shooting to Debrisay. But there was a sudden picture in Ossington's mind. He imagined himself in possession of the shooting. Ninian would be invited to shoot over his own moors, and then would be found lying dead upon them! This had all come in a flash, and Os-

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 187

sington lost no time in asking Sleipner what amount of rent was expected.

“But no!” exclaimed Sleipner. “Your lordship does not actually mean to perpetrate such a charity? Having suffered——”

“What’s the rent?” demanded Ossington.

“The rent,” replied Sleipner, “is two thousand pounds. But I ought to tell your lordship that there are other inquiries about it.”

“Two thousand. That’s a big rent,” replied Ossington; “but still, I’ll see—I’ll see my solicitor.”

“Of course your lordship knows,” said Sleipner—“your lordship certainly knows the expenses connected with a deer forest. Why, it takes twenty-five acres to feed a single deer!”

“Why has n’t Bargarran put his shooting in the market in the ordinary way?” asked Ossington.

Sleipner only shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, two thousand, two thousand!” repeated Ossington. “I shall see, and I shall tell you as soon as possible.”

He went away excitedly. “In the confusion

of a deer drive !” he thought. All day he made calculations in order to discover whether he was able to meet the necessary expenses. He determined, indeed, to take the shooting whether he could afford to pay for it or not. But he had hardly reckoned with Sleipner’s astuteness. Sleipner, in short, was anxious to know whether it were possible to obtain more than two thousand for Bargarran’s shooting. He went to Debrisay, therefore, whom he found alone, within half an hour after Ossington had left. Sleipner shook his head mournfully, and asked Debrisay if he had heard the news. Then he unfolded the tale of Bargarran’s difficulties, and mentioned that the shootings were in the market.

“Would you take over the shootings from me, Mr. Debrisay ?” asked Sleipner.

When Debrisay inquired the rent, Sleipner said it was to be three thousand pounds.

“Why, then, I’ll take them,” said Debrisay. “By Jove ! I must go to the old chap. Settle the thing up. Does Nin—does young Bargarran know anything about this ?”

“I hardly think so,” replied Sleipner. “I’m

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 189

glad you 've got the shootings, Mr. Debrisay. Lord Ossington wanted them, and I 'm afraid he 'll be very angry."

"Ossington?" demanded Debrisay. "The Bargarran shootings?"

Sleipner shrugged his shoulders.

"Strange," said Debrisay. "I 'm going to look for young Bargarran."

He was unable, however, to find Ninian in the hotel, and he went immediately to Bargarran House. He found the Laird almost unrecognisable. Dalbiac was out, and the young man who opened the door informed Debrisay that Bargarran was ill and unable to receive strangers. Debrisay, however, insisted on his name being sent in, and when the old man heard it he said eagerly, "Yes, yes!" He was sitting in a wide arm-chair, and each of his hands was resting on one of the arms. His mass of white hair lay dishevelled on his head and fell over his brow. He asked Debrisay to take a seat after he had held his hand for a few minutes.

"Ah, what is it?" asked Bargarran. "Is it about Ninian? How is he?"

"Ninian is very well," replied Debrisay. "I was sorry to hear of your—of your slight misunderstanding."

"God knows what it has meant to me, sir!" exclaimed Bargarran. "But I am ready to receive my son. Tell him I have forgiven him."

"So far as I understand, Laird, there is not much to forgive. It is his injured pride that keeps him from returning. He knows, and I have reason to know, that he is absolutely innocent of what you suspected." Bargarran looked at him doubtfully.

"There was a key," he murmured, "found. —Ah! I wish to forget everything."

"You have been deceived, Laird," continued Debrisay. "He has never seen that girl since. He came straight to the Hôtel de Luxe, and slept with me that night. It was only his kind heart which prompted him to save her from the streets and to offer her shelter in your house; but, so far as I hear, you refused to listen to him."

A cry broke from Bargarran, and he looked across in misery at Debrisay.

"My son!—my son, Ninian!—Will you bring him back to me?—Will you tell him his old father asks his forgiveness?—What will he say when he knows?—Ah! do *you* know that I have given up my shootings to a man—a stranger?"

"I know it all," said Debrisay. "*I* have taken your shootings over. Will you be my guest, Laird!"

"What!—what!" asked Bargarran, trembling and confused.

"I say it is all right," answered Debrisay, coming near him, while Bargarran seized his hand. "Go up when you choose. I will bring Ninian. I will surprise him. Ha! and I feel quite sure that in a week your hand will be as steady as ever and your shot as sure. I bet you will make a bigger bag than any of us, as you always used to, you know!"

The old man was weeping. "What do you say? Can it all be true? How can you be so kind?—I do not wish to die here. I am in the hands of strange people!"

"It is all settled, I tell you, Laird. You must cheer up. You won't see Nin *here*, I'm

afraid. But I'll arrange everything for the North. We shall have a party, as in the old days, eh?" said Debrisay, rallying him.

"How shall I face Nin?—and there is a man here—O God, I am terrified, do you know! Have I lost *everything*, Mr. Debrisay?" exclaimed Bargarran, with a gesture of despair.

"Not at all," replied Debrisay. "Let me know when you go up North. Be there before us. Nin and I will follow. And then, old days again!"

Bargarran followed him to the door, while a childish smile broke over his face.

"Good-bye, oh, you kind boy! I'm an old man, and every one of you seems so young! *I will not tell him!*" he exclaimed, gripping Debrisay's hand; "*I shall escape, shall I?*"

"I shall call to-morrow. I'm in a great hurry," said Debrisay, and went hastily back to the Hôtel de Luxe.

It was an afternoon and an evening of surprises. Ninian had gone off in sulks in the morning to Ranelagh for the polo match which

was to be played that afternoon. Ossington had gone to consult his solicitor, not merely about his suspicions of his wife, but about the price of Bargarran's shooting. When Debrisay arrived in the hotel, he found Beatrice in the passage of their *étage*. She was dressed to go out, and as she came, meeting him opposite the door of her private room, she stopped and gave him her hand. He opened the door for her, and she beckoned him in.

"My God, Beatrice!" he exclaimed, and threw his arms about her.

She was asking to be forgiven and muttering, "The coward I have been!"

"Why are you crying, Beatrice, why are you crying?" he asked.

He felt her soft hair against his face and the familiar lips upon his lips and the sense of sudden radiant things.

"Why did I listen to them!" she was saying in the intervals of great sobs.

She felt like a singer who has laid aside a great song and then gone back to it, surprised to discover in it deeper music and passion than before.

"Arthur, Arthur, dear Arthur—do you despise me!"

"Darling! why are you crying?" he asked.
"Give me your lips, or I shall go mad!"

These rapids of human feeling and loosened waves of joy and sorrow are not to be described. He only held her close while she whispered:

"It is intolerable to be without you—. I will ask him for a divorce before— Arthur, where is it to end?"

"I will go away," he said. "Listen——"

But she clung to him the more fiercely.

"Have you heard about the Bargarrans?" he asked.

"No," she said with a smile; "that ridiculous boy! Poor Nin!"

"I have taken over their shootings. The old man's in trouble. Darling, you are not listening."

"No. Only stay, Arthur. Oh, don't go! Ossington—" she said, starting back.

"Yes, he might come," said Debrisay.
"There is something terrible in our love, and I am afraid for you."

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 195

"Write to me, write to me!" she exclaimed as he left her.

She knew now that he loved her even more passionately than before. Debrisay knew it, too, and as he paced his room restlessly he was busy with the momentous fact that now at last she belonged to him.

It is the chief irony of these episodes that it was none other than Ossington who accelerated their climax. He came hurriedly back to the Hôtel de Luxe and said to Sleipner:

"Yes, fix up that business for me; I'll give two thousand pounds."

"I am sorry, your lordship," replied Sleipner, "very sorry indeed; but that other party has taken the shootings—Mr. Debrisay, in fact!"

"Debrisay!" exclaimed Ossington, betraying anger and emotion.

"I supposed from what your lordship said that in your lordship's opinion the shooting was not worth that sum," replied Sleipner. "Moreover, Mr. Debrisay is a particular friend of the Bargarrans, and I must tell you now that for their sakes it was a matter of urgency

—a question of money, in short. Bargarran was *forced* to let these shootings."

"What right have *you* to suppose that I can't pay as much as Debrisay?" demanded Ossington.

"I am extremely vexed—" began Sleipner, but Ossington walked away.

And certainly it must have been an ungovernable desire which drove him to go to Debrisay and actually haggle for the shootings. When he was suddenly announced, Debrisay supposed that the news that *he* had been in Beatrice's room had already reached Ossington. He prepared for the worst, therefore. But Ossington began gently enough.

"You will be surprised, Debrisay," he said. "to see *me* here—very surprised, indeed, I suppose. I hope you will excuse me. I hear you have taken over the Bargarran shootings. Now, they were first offered to me, and Sleipner has played me a trick, rather. If it is a question of higher price, I should be very glad to take them over, and give you whatever you ask. I particularly wanted that shooting."

"Oh, well," said Debrisay, laughing, "I was

Ninian, Debrisay, Lady Ossington 197

wanting a shooting, too ; and if the Bargarrans had n't come my way, I would have got another one. But I assure you that if you want to shoot over *those* moors, I shall be most delighted if you—and—and Lady Ossington will be my guests—very happy indeed I shall be. Why, the past is all passed, Ossington ; we may be friends now, I hope."

Ossington looked at him in sudden, ill-disguised doubt and suspicion. He was all at once bewildered by new conjectures, and felt the plot slipping from him.

"Ninian will be there, too," added Debrisay.

"Oh ! Will *he* be there as your guest ?" asked Ossington, eagerly. He had the boy's letters to Beatrice in his pocket.

"Yes," said Debrisay ; "I'm sure I'll get him to come. We're both — both tired of this. You know, besides, old Bargarran's in difficulties ; he's very ill. Do say you will come !"

Ossington was breathless with his own ideas. He had a longing to get away from him and be able to think in secret. "Shall the *three* of them have to be murdered ?" he asked himself.

"I hear the shooting will be very good this

season," continued Debrisay, while Ossington hesitated.

"You are very kind, Debrisay," he said at length — "very kind indeed."

"Do shake hands, then!" urged Debrisay. "I'm told you're even a better shot than you used to be."

Debrisay's insistence, his audacity in having suggested Beatrice, too, as a guest amazed Ossington. He had been so long on the rack, so long tortured by the dream and nightmare of his wife's infidelity, that these finishing strokes, which suggested a far deeper intrigue than he had suspected, made him feel like an assassin in the midst of them. He became haunted by the idea of a *ménage à trois*, and looked at Debrisay and asked where young Bargarran was.

"He's gone to the polo match at Ranelagh," replied Debrisay.

"Oh, well," said Ossington, deadly pale, "I hardly know what to say in reply to your great kindness."

"Why, come, that's all!" urged Debrisay.

Either Debrisay was the most magnanimous

of men or an insolent and subtle adulterer. At that moment he, too, betrayed signs of emotion as he thought of the possibility of a reunion of them all on the Northern moorland.

Ossington likewise grasped the situation and seized his last chance. He saw Debrisay's excitement. It would be far better to shift the scene from the Hôtel de Luxe to a lonely moor ; there, not here, he might perhaps be able to wrench the truth at last from them. Debrisay's big form towered above him, and, in comparison with so large a figure, Ossington did really look like a jumping-jack, as Beatrice once said. He gave his hand to Debrisay.

"Why, I can only thank you, Debrisay," he said. "I shall—shall speak to my wife. I have no doubt— Why, it is extraordinarily kind of you ! It's not the first time, is it, ha ! —that the old—lover has welcomed at his board the two criminals, is it, Debrisay ?"

Debrisay laughed very heartily, shook hands, and did his best to control himself. It was now time to tell the news to Ninian.

But that evening Ninian came back in no gay mood. Sleipner had been pressing him

for payment; and when Ninian, thoroughly indignant, had reminded him *who* the Bargarans happened to be, and that the rent of even a few acres of his father's shootings would cover thirty times three weeks' terms for a suite of rooms in the Hôtel de Luxe, Sleipner had smiled so contemptuously that Ninian had felt disturbed all day.

"What's wrong, Nin?" asked Debrisay, after they had dined together in their rooms in apparent bad humour.

"Confound it all! I'm jolly sick of everything," replied Ninian.

"Money?" suggested Debrisay.

"Well, there's that, too. That beast Sleipner has been insulting me. And then I owe you a lot. Besides, I'm dashed sick of all this. Beatrice has been making a fool of me, just as she did with you, I suppose. We ought to have gone away when we first made up our minds. You're quite right. Curse women!"

Debrisay started.

"Well, what about going North?" he said.

"I? No shooting for *me* this year. I won't go near my father. He may shoot his

own grouse and deer. No, no!" retorted Ninian.

There was a long pause, during which Debrisay hesitated to break the news. At length Ninian rose and said:

"Good night. I'm going out."

"Good night," said Debrisay, wondering what the boy was going to do.

He had not been gone three minutes when Debrisay jumped up, put on his hat and coat, and followed him. He asked the porter which way young Bargarran had gone, and the porter said he had gone down Piccadilly on the right-hand side. Debrisay made after him.

It was a night in the beginning of August. The air seemed to be struggling with its own corruption, and was as heavy as the impure, incense-laden air of old cathedrals. But a purer breath came across from the Green Park, cool, and then cooler, but never cold and never wholly pure. The lights of the shops were all out, but the electric street-lamps made every face which came into their glare visible even to its wrinkles, aggravating that strange pallor of the human face in modern

cities. Down the entire length of Piccadilly the dense fringe of green leaves on the left was moving in gentle undulations as the lukewarm wind rose and fell. Above were the stars, that watch Piccadilly as they used to watch Gomorrah and Sodom, Great Sidon, Nineveh, Pompeii, and the old harlot cities of the ancient world. It was on the stroke of midnight, hour of witches and of the Greek witch Aphrodite, who listens with a smile upon her sardonic lips when Christian churches ring midnight; for, when other gods have passed, she remains the immortal and gaudy idol of the soul's mania. Night was pouring into London like a drug, but Piccadilly was stark awake. Piccadilly contains the whole riddle of damnation. But the moralists do hope that we all go at least zigzag to God, and no doubt it is the moralists who go most zigzag of all.

At the corner of Stratton Street, at the spot where he used to find his little blind Lazarus, Ninian found Henriette. She was dressed in a pale blue gown which looked like satin; her hat was the same colour, and she

had her fan, and there was a misery of jewels on her breast and in her black hair.

"Henriette!" exclaimed Ninian, hardly able to recognise her in this transformation; "are *you* at this game? Good God, Henriette! I forgot!—Did you not come to the Hôtel de Luxe?"

He took her down the *cul-de-sac* of Stratton Street.

"*Hein!*" she said, shrugging her shoulders and smiling upon him. "Our Hôtel de Luxe is on the street, monsieur. I did call, but was driven away. They said you refused to see me, you and your Lady Ossington. *Eh bien!*"

"That's not so!" he exclaimed; "but I do admit I forgot, Henriette."

"*C'est la même chose au bout de la journée,*" she said. "I have struggled—I am here for the first time.—*Ah, mon beau garçon, je vous aime!*"

"Henriette, are you lying?" asked Ninian with great passion, looking into her wild eyes in the full blaze of the electric light. "Do you love me?—do you really love me? Where's Dalbiac?"

She shrugged her shoulders for a reply, and then added :

"I have seen him walking with other women. *Qu'est ce que ça me fait ?*"

"Henriette, Henriette!" said Ninian, "let's go——"

But before he could add a word he felt a powerful hand on his shoulder. He turned and saw Debrisay.

"Come on, Nin," said Debrisay.

Ninian struck at him furiously, while Henriette screamed. Debrisay, who was twice the boy's size, seized him by the collar and began to drag him off. Henriette struggled to hold Ninian.

"By God!" said Debrisay, "I saw your old father to-day, and told him you were innocent — Will you come quietly or not, Nin?"

The boy, unable to control his rage, but feeling himself overpowered, muttered oaths between his teeth and attempted to kick Debrisay.

"Nin, give me your word of honour that you'll walk quietly back with me, and I prom-

ise to let go," said Debrisay. "If not, I'll drag you this way to the hotel."

"Confound you! What right have you? I tell you it's the little girl; it's the first night she's been— Curse you, Arthur! what damned right——?"

"Even if it's true, I can't help it," replied Debrisay. "Nin, will you come quietly or not?"

"All right, curse you! I'll come," said Ninian, with tears of rage in his eyes, while Henriette tried to hold him back. She followed them to the corner of Stratton Street, and watched them going in the direction of the Hôtel de Luxe. Then she turned down Piccadilly, muttering :

"Il me faut trouver un autre, alors."





CHAPTER VII

MOORLAND OF BARGARRAN

IT was on the ninth day of August, at seven o'clock in the morning, that The Bargarran rang his bedroom bell. He rang it twice, and it was not Dalbiac, to be sure, who answered it, but the youth who was serving in his stead came breathlessly up the stairs, knocked at the Laird's door, and asked what was wanted. The Bargarran, in a haughty voice and with his eyes burning, said :

“ Tell *that man* to come to me ! ”

The boy, wondering what this tone meant, hurried to Dalbiac's room and told the ex-valet that the Laird had evidently some urgent business with him. Dalbiac came only at his leisure, however, and not until the Laird had rung the bell six times. He found the old

man sitting bolt-upright in his dressing-gown, making a bold struggle against physical weakness. His hands were gripping the arms of the arm-chair.

"Shave me," he said to Dalbiac.

"Shave you! *Sacr*—!" cried Dalbiac. "What do you mean?"

"I mean to be rid of you," replied Bargarran, straining his voice and shaking out £125 in Bank of England notes. "This is the money, villain. I have paid you handsome interest, not because you deserve it, but for my own pride's sake."

This sudden change in manner, the imperious look in the Laird's angry eyes, the masterly tone, and the contemptuous gesture astonished Dalbiac, who tried to guess what had happened.

"I need your services no longer," continued Bargarran, raising his arm as a signal of dismissal. "We leave for my moors almost immediately. Go away, young man, and be ashamed of the manner in which you treated your master when he was in difficulties."

"Eh, what?" demanded Dalbiac. "And Sleipner? What has happened?"

"It is no business of yours," retorted the old man, counting the notes and throwing them at Dalbiac. "Leave my son's bedroom, leave the house, or I shall get the police — do you hear? This instant!"

As these words fell like hammer-strokes, Dalbiac recoiled from the Laird and stood looking about the room in doubt.

"Thank you," he then said, as he took up the notes, and he said it in a manner which seemed to indicate increased respect and some fear. Already the Laird was rejoicing in these signs of abashed insolence. But when Dalbiac actually began to assume a menial's demeanour again, and to fumble for the words "sir" and "laird," Bargarran became conscious of a desire for appeasement and encouraged the ex-valet's stupefaction.

"Sir," exclaimed Dalbiac, amazed, "I'll — I'll shave you, Laird!"

And then he set about lifting and laying things on the toilet-table in the old style. He did not listen to Bargarran's mutterings, but

went hastily from the bedroom to the dressing-room, and brought back towels and shaving-brush, razors, and soap. Bargarran, indeed, was too desirous of retrieving his dignity and appeasing his outraged vanity, so that Dalbiac's sudden alacrity brought a kind of satisfaction. A curt dismissal would not have been half so flattering to his sense of authority, and it was with visible pleasure that he saw Dalbiac attempt to expiate his insolence by an instant return to a servant's duties.

When, therefore, pardon was craved, and Dalbiac, conscious that the Laird must have been suddenly reinstated in his old position, actually begged to be allowed to use the razors again, the old man assented with an imperial air and a gesture of authority and contempt.

He lay back in his chair while Dalbiac, whose face was burning with excitement, spread the towel, sharpened the razor on a strop, and lathered the Laird's cheeks. It is said that at the crack of a whip freed slaves used to run as if back to their labour; and so in an instant the ex-valet became a valet again, and wondered if Sleipner had suddenly played

false. When, however, the Laird saw the razor aloft in Dalbiac's hand, a sudden terror seized him; he put his hand up to his throat, and rose from the chair with a cry :

"My God!—go away! I thought you were going to murder me!"

Dalbiac started back and looked at the old man, whose face was convulsed with fear.

"You shall not!" he was crying. "My God! do people feel like this before they are murdered?"

Dalbiac implored his master to allow him to perform this menial office, and went upon his knees and prayed to be forgiven. The sight rejoiced the Laird, whose pride was hungry.

"No," said Bargarran, and pointed to the door.

Dalbiac, half-incredulous, but wholly excited, went away, and hurried to the Hôtel de Luxe, and slipped into Sleipner's office.

"I'll wait for Mr. Sleipner," he said to the clerk, who told him that the manager was downstairs wrangling with the head cook.

"There 's been such a row," he said,

"that his serene highness the head cook has threatened to put petroleum in the sauces to-day."

Dalbiac feigned to smile, but was looking anxiously through the glass panels at young Bargarran, who was reading a newspaper on the central lounge. The ex-valet withdrew to the other end of the little bureau, so as not to be seen, and occupied himself with the discomfort of his own thoughts. At last Sleipner came, and asked him what the devil he wanted at that time of day.

"Private," whispered Dalbiac, and nodded in the direction of the clerk, as if Sleipner should order him to go away.

Sleipner, with a grumbling grace, told the clerk to go out for a few minutes and to buy some roses for Lady Ossington and get them sent upstairs. Then he asked Dalbiac what he wanted, and Dalbiac in turn asked what on earth had happened. Sleipner burst out laughing, and told him briefly and briskly all that Debrisay had done to pull the old Laird out of his financial scrape.

"And the big Debrisay, I may tell you,

is still good for even more charity. A great, silent, cautious, and painstaking gentleman. The *Ossingtons* are going up North with him! And no doubt it is on Bargarran's moor that her ladyship, to the skirl of the pipes, will at last dance her heart away. But I suppose *you 're* not going North with Bargarran?" asked Sleipner, with a wicked leer.

Dalbiac began to swear and to ask why he had not been consulted, or at least warned in time, and, when pressed by Sleipner, admitted that Bargarran had dismissed him.

"I told you to tickle them with flattery as with a feather. It's easy for them to make big mistakes and retrieve themselves. It's only rich people who may get into debt. Now, I suppose you think you have been a fool? So do I. I thought you did not seem to fill that easy-chair in Bargarran's room, and that the cigar was too big for your mouth, eh?" quizzed Sleipner.

Dalbiac attempted to smile, and eagerly asked if a sub-manager were needed in the Hôtel de Luxe.

“Ha!” laughed Sleipner, “nothing lower?”

Dalbiac sulked and frowned, while Sleipner began to show signs of impatience.

“No,” said Sleipner, “I advise you to go and put on your livery again. You look well in livery. You gasp? Can’t be helped. I’ll write a little note for you and ask Bargarran to pardon you, eh?”

He sat down at his desk, and wrote a little note to the Laird, and then handed it to Dalbiac, who betrayed signs of chagrin and rage, but nevertheless accepted it.

“He still owes you?” he asked.

“Oh, well, you see,” said Sleipner, “Mr. Debrisay has given me a splendid sum for the shootings, and has thus put things to rights. It would not *pay* me to bother Bargarran now. Conciliate, conciliate—no other way in this world. Why, Mr. Debrisay is a *name*. He would paint me black if I attempted to squeeze Bargarran. I recover the double of my loan! No, no; I have sent the Laird some excellent fruit and some very fine flowers. See that you draw his attention to them when you stand behind his chair to-night.”

At these words Dalbiac gave signs of indignation and surprise.

"Ah, yes," continued Sleipner, smiling, "but there is no chance for you until your livery is warm on you again. Get into it. And listen : never give your head the way the button gives its head to the button-hook."

Dalbiac's effort to smile only made him look more miserable.

"See, there 's young Bargarran!" said Sleipner, pointing towards the lounge. "Could n't *he* say a word for you?"

Dalbiac shrank back and shook his head.

"He 's a handsome fellow," continued Sleipner. "If Bargarran *primus* takes you back, I almost envy you. Send me word from those moors so lately mine. There 's to be a general handshaking all round. I do laugh. I never thought your Englishman could be so naïve as Mr. Debrisay seems to be. Ah, you wish to go out by the back way ! You remember it, of course."

Sleipner shook hands and gave more advice.

"Take slaps," he said, "in order to learn how to give them."

Dalbiac went off thoroughly broken and crestfallen. When he approached Bargarran House he cursed it from roof to basement ; he was tortured by the sense of ridicule and this sudden fall. Relief was possible only in the desire for revenge ; and it was, perhaps, natural that he should desire to wreak revenge, not so much on Bargarran as on Ninian. He still believed it was Ninian who had stolen Henriette. Quickly enough came the suggestion that this temporary abasement should be endured for the sake of vengeance. He would importune The Bargarran, and present Sleipner's letter ; and then, perhaps, on the moor a rifle-shot at night might adjust matters. In fact, Dalbiac was working towards the same criminal goal which Ossington, maddened by other causes, had already reached. Their minds must have met and touched somewhere that night in the dream of murder. He let himself in noiselessly by means of the latch-key ; then he crept upstairs and put himself into his livery. It bagged on him because he had grown thinner. He looked at himself in the livery in a mirror, and his purpose became

fixed. Vanity and despair were too much for him, but he was the sort of man able to wait for reckonings. He descended the stairs, and midway met Mrs. McClintock, who, seeing him in his livery again, burst into wild, cynical laughter. Dalbiac wished to hurl her down the stairs.

"Na, na," says she; "it kittles me up to see sic a fuil! Awa! Tak aff thae claithees, you blastit wretch!"

Dalbiac passed down, however, without daring to cast a glance upon her, and went to the library and presented himself to Bargarran. Now he became abject, gave Sleipner's letter, and while Bargarran was reading it (with great difficulty, for he was not far from being blind), Dalbiac tied the old man's shoe-laces. The Laird was smoking, and Dalbiac brought an ash-tray and a spittoon. Too vain not to rejoice in these signs of repentance, Bargarran felt gratified and comforted.

"He pleads for you," he said, tapping Sleipner's letter.

And when the ex-valet ventured to declare that it was now his chief desire to become valet

once more and to be allowed to obliterate the memories of his insubordination, the Laird listened attentively with his hand at his ear. It was lucky for Dalbiac that the old man's vanity and the Scriptures were actually found working in common. The Laird, indeed, was looking forward with a sense of gratitude to a great reconciliation with Ninian in the home of their ancestors. God had answered his prayer, and had made Debrisay the wonderful instrument. Here was a chance to forgive a backslider in gratitude for mercies vouchsafed beyond desert. He looked at Dalbiac, whose eyes fell before the old haughty face.

"I forgive you," said Bargarran, proudly; "go and clean the rifles."

The last words acted like a shock upon Dalbiac, who visibly started and jerked out his thanks. He withdrew quickly, and went to the rifle-cases and took out and handled and polished the only things that suited his mood at that moment.

To Mrs. McClintock's disgust, therefore, he was reinstated and began to take part in the packing. Nothing she attempted to say or to

advise shook Bargarran's forgiving spirit, and he told her bluntly to mind her own affairs. The old man grew impatient to start.

"Bargarran," said Mrs. McClintock, resigning herself as best she could, "your voice is loud and strang ance mair. It's like ony sang to hear it. Lord be thankit, ye dinna bow sae laigh."

Bargarran, however, had no desire to be reminded of his humiliations, and warned her to cease mentioning the events of the past week.

"Ay," says she, "I'll haud my auld clapper. Och, but it's fine to see ye! Ye're like ony aik. Ye needna tak it ill, Laird, that auld Mary's singin' lal de lal."

Meantime Debrisay was attempting to win back Ninian's confidence. The old Laird in his impatience had asked Debrisay to bring the boy at once to the house in Piccadilly, but Debrisay knew Ninian better. He knew that it would be necessary to cajole him North. Indeed, after that escapade in Stratton Street Ninian refused to see Debrisay and decided

to leave the Hôtel de Luxe. He locked his door against Debrisay, who knocked in vain. But Sleipner had some business with the young man, and it was not possible to keep the door long shut against *him*. Sleipner, in fact, was becoming restless about his bill, and Ninian was compelled to give him an interview. Debrisay suspected what was taking place, and his suspicions were confirmed when Sleipner came to ask his advice.

"They are all right," Debrisay assured him. "They have plenty of money. You shall be paid. There is not a doubt in the matter. They have only been in bad luck recently."

Sleipner accepted the advice, and went quietly downstairs, while Debrisay walked boldly into Ninian's room; and it was certainly not possible for the boy to remain long sulky before the one man for whom he had a real affection. Debrisay's "Nin!" spoken in the tone of their old friendship was enough to make the scape-grace look up and smile.

"Yes," he said, "you're right; I'm in a devil of a funk, Arthur. I've plenty of money to pay you and every one, but I can't get hold of

it till November, you see ; and I *won't* go to the governor. So you and Sleipner will just have to wait !”

Debrisay nodded and said it was all right.

“It was beastly of you, Arthur,” continued Ninian, “to break out on the little girl. I did n't say I loved her, and I'm hanged if I could have given her a farthing, either ; but I was sorry for her.”

Debrisay said nothing about Henriette, but immediately announced that he had taken The Bargarran's shootings for that season. Ninian looked at him in surprise.

“You don't say so !” he exclaimed. “By Jove ! that 's funny ! I suppose the governor won't go this year because I won't be there.”

“Won't you come with me, then ?” asked Debrisay.

“By Jove, Arthur, you're a ripper !” said Ninian. “Of course I'll come. What a lark ! I'll be jolly glad to get out of this.”

“You know every corner of your deer forest, don't you ?”

“I should think I do ; and there's going to be good sport this year. Look here, you must

have seen my governor. Did he talk about me?"

"A great deal," replied Debrisay. "Won't you go to see him before you leave?"

Debrisay risked the question, after all, because, if Ninian consented, it would mean only that the reconciliation would take place sooner. But Ninian shook his head.

"No, I won't," he said. "He behaved in a beastly way to me."

"Well," said Debrisay, shrugging his shoulders, "but it's wrong, I think."

"Arthur, you're awfully good. Confound it all, you're a clinker, old chap! I can hardly believe it all. You and I on the old moors! All to ourselves.—When are you starting?" asked Ninian.

"Oh, in a day or two," replied Debrisay. "Just as soon as Slocock can pack."

"I'm glad, old man. I can't thank you enough. I'm dashed lucky to know you. Only friend I've got. As for Beatrice, well, I'll go off without seeing *her*, I bet. It's been a jolly silly season indeed. Look here, I'm going to order a suit of clothes—shooting things. I'll

see you at lunch," said Ninian, going out, "and I'll manœuvre old Sleip."

Debrisay had meant to tell him that Beatrice and Ossington might actually be with them on the moors, but he refrained. The truth was, he was unable to conceal his own excitement, and as yet he hardly realised the audacity of his proposal to Ossington. It had never occurred to him to make the suggestion until Ossington had come to him to speak about the Bargarran shootings. It seemed ridiculous to hope that Ossington would accept it.

Ossington, indeed, was ready to agree to anything which might throw light on the real situation. He fixed his eyes on his wife when he began to tell her that Debrisay was now in possession of the Bargarran shootings and had actually invited them to join him the last week of August. The first of those facts Beatrice already knew, because she had heard it from Debrisay's own lips, but the second fact was an extraordinary surprise. Everything she said was now interpreted only in one way by her husband. He believed that she was simulating astonishment, and that *Ninian* and not

Debrisay had already told her about the shootings. As a matter of fact, she remembered that Arthur had told her about Bargarran's troubles.

"Bargarran has had to let his shootings. You did not know that?" asked Ossington.

Beatrice felt a deep flush overspread her face, and she evaded the question.

"Really!" she exclaimed. "How extraordinary.—What an extraordinary proposal!"

Her profile was turned to Ossington, who noticed those fine lines of her face which had won his admiration fourteen months ago, and he contrasted now the different emotions she was rousing in him. She became impassive again and appeared to be indifferent to the news. Her silence maddened Ossington. He wanted to hear her asking eagerly if he had decided to go, but she said nothing.

"Did you know about the shootings?" he asked again.

"How should I have known?" she asked in reply.

His suspicions were only deepened. Half the day passed, but she never recurred to the

question. She betrayed no sign that the news had excited her, and yet she was in great agitation. She wondered how Arthur had at last been so bold. There was something amazing in this muffled love, this love without signals or means of communication except such as came in this manner through hostile hands. She required to use her utmost caution. At last Ossington, ravenous for the truth, said :

“ You mean to pretend that you don’t want to go ? ”

“ I think,” replied Beatrice, “ that it is very kind of him.”

“ And young Bargarran ’s going, too,” said Ossington, with special emphasis, waiting to see what result *that* news might have.

“ Oh, really ! ” exclaimed Beatrice. “ That ’s delightful. I hope, then, that the poor old Laird is going. I have not yet found out what has happened between Ninian and his father.”

Ossington had a fixed belief that every word she spoke was meant to conceal her real thoughts. Nothing she could now say or do would appear to him to be worthy of trust.

He began to hate her in a very deadly way. He looked at her steadily, and endeavoured to catch some sign of emotion and embarrassment, a blush, a twitch of the lip, or a wavering of the eye; but she had regained her impassivity and took up her book again. He left her for a few minutes, and then came suddenly back to see whether in the interval she had allowed her excitement to burst. And, indeed, he did notice a change. The flush had returned to her face, and there was a new look in her eyes, which were suffused and dilated.

"We must decide soon," said Ossington. "I agree with you. It is quite—quite amiable of him."

Beatrice was touched to the heart, and began to pity her husband and to feel a great imminent inward struggle.

"If you wish me to go, George," she said at length, "I will go."

This way of putting it only enraged him, and he was the sort of man who never forgives intellectual superiority in a woman. He felt foolish in her hands.

"I am glad Mr. Debrisay has got hold of Ninian," continued Beatrice. "He is a very foolish boy, and requires a good influence."

"My God!" thought Ossington, "she's devilish subtle. Does she love them both? I've heard of such things."

There was something in Ossington's silence and in the concentration of his look which made her wish to escape from him at that moment; but he did not allow her to go till she had promised to accompany him to the Bargarran moors. He wanted to hear her saying eagerly that she would go, and when at last she did say, "Yes, I'll go, then," he seemed to hear the real cry of passion.

"I must ask him to lunch," said Ossington, going out.

He went to shake hands with Debrisay, and to tell him what a splendid fellow he was. Debrisay smiled, and said by-gones were by-gones. And then Ossington, trembling to his finger-tips, invited him to lunch. Debrisay accepted the invitation with alacrity.

"But," he said, "don't tell Ninian that Beatrice and you are going North."

Ossington looked at him.

"Why not?" he asked.

Was it jealousy that made Debrisay say such a thing? And yet young Bargarran *was* to be of the party. The whole thing was such an infernal kaleidoscope of cross-lights that Ossington almost lost his self-control in a desire to challenge Debrisay for an explanation.

"Well," said Debrisay, "it 's this way. I want Ninian to go, because I have promised the old Laird to bring them together. Now, Ninian thinks Beatrice is vexed with him, and if he knew she were going *he* would not go. He has refused to see Beatrice lately, has he not?"

"Oh, has he? Then we will not come," said Ossington, promptly. He was becoming actually cunning at parry and thrust.

And when Debrisay said eagerly, "Why, of course you will. You are my guests—he 's a silly boy," Ossington could have struck him.

"Oh, well," he said, pretending to smile, "you will take lunch in our rooms on Sunday?"

"That will do splendidly," said Debrisay,

shaking hands. "Ninian is going to be out of town. He's going down to Weybridge with Bob Gartly."

In driving them all steadily towards the stockade Ossington displayed some skill. At the luncheon, for instance, he had already become too shrewd to allow his own immeasurable disgust to spoil his demeanour. He never detested his wife so much as at that moment, and yet it was with a show of enthusiasm and large-heartedness that he asked the big Debrisay to drink to their reconciliation. Beatrice seemed to herself to be sitting in a dream. She had hardly expected such an ordeal. There was a red spot burning in her cheek, but Ossington pretended not to see it. Yet before the meal was over it was no longer Ninian he suspected. Beatrice attempted banter and chaff, and turned the conversation suddenly from one thing to another, conscious the whole time of the depth and passion of a strange intrigue. For instance, she asked about the cause of rupture between Ninian and old Bargarran. Debrisay, however, said nothing about Henriette.

"He will be so surprised to see *us*, George," said Beatrice, turning to Ossington, who was as pale as if physical sickness were upon him.

"Yes," he said, and looked round the room.

Debrisay, big and taciturn, was the real magnet pulling those two towards him by a kind of attraction of despair.

The talk passed to the prospects of sport that season.

"I hear they are very good," said Debrisay. "Bargarran shot little last year. You're as good a shot as ever, Ossington?"

"He's magnificent," replied Beatrice for him. "He never misses anything."

"Ah, well, we shall have big bags," said Debrisay. "Nin is a crack, too."

"Are you going stalking?" asked Ossington, with signs of roused interest.

"Of course; of course. It's the best deer forest in Scotland," said Debrisay. "We'll have some wonderful days; so you must n't bring small shot merely."

"All right," said Ossington.

"I hate a battue," said Beatrice. "I will

not go with you to the moors. It 's murderous work."

"No. You 'll stay with the old Laird. I 'm just afraid he 'll need nursing," said Debrisay.

"They will both be so grateful to *you*," replied Beatrice. "Has The Bargarran gone North yet?"

"Last night. The old housekeeper and that curious man Dalbiac, the valet, went with him," said Debrisay.

"I know old Mary. You see, it will be like old days to me. I spent two summers there when Ninian was only this height," said Beatrice, raising her hand about a foot higher than the table. "He used always to be in kilts, and was such a beautiful boy."

Often there seems to be in human relationship a force, like the force of gravitation, which drives us into each other's orbits, and then into a common pit of destruction.

The old Laird was already on his way, blessing Debrisay's name, and thankful to be rid at last of the heat and torment of London and the torment of its memories. He was haggard

and feeble, to be sure, but the one last desire was keeping him alive—the desire to hold Ninian in his arms again and to feel the boy's kiss upon his cheeks. Dalbiac and Mrs. McClintock were in attendance, but it was only her dread lest the Laird might succumb on the journey that permitted the housekeeper to use even civil words to Dalbiac. Yet Bargarran had forgiven him and had said to the old woman that those who stand on their grave's edge had better not stand on their dignity. "I'm nae sae sicker!" says she. But Dalbiac had become body-servant again and was indispensable to Bargarran. It was a matter of jealousy and rage to Mrs. McClintock. It was only at intervals during the long journey that she was able to see the Laird, and every time he seemed to be paler and more haggard. His perpetual question "Are we near?" agitated her. Yet when he reached his ancient house one August dusk, after a long drive over the moors, he seemed to regain his old chieftain's air. His shepherds in kilts, his gillies, and stalkers, and gadsmen with their dogs, and a crowd of crofters met his carriage and raised

their bonnets and caps. But presently they began to whisper how ghastly and "uncanny-like" the Laird looked. Next morning, however, he was bent on being active, and questioned his shepherds and gamekeepers on the sheep and the game and about the movements of the deer. Then with an effort he mounted his old pony and set out for the glen, meaning to visit some of his people. He had not gone far, however, when he felt already faint, and was obliged to turn the pony's head homewards. Mrs. McClintock, who had resumed her old authority, put him on a sofa, where he whispered, "It's been a nightmare! I've come hame to dee, Mary!"

"How daur ye say sic a thing?" says she. "Na, na, it maks me sonsy to see ye in your ain hame, Bargarran. D'ye hear the grouse crawin'? And syne the paitricks 'll be scraichin'. And the starnies are above ye, Bargarran. Och, Laird, the bit craws are gruntin' tae, they're sae glad!"

"Mary," said Bargarran, "tell me when you hear his feet."

"Aiblins the morn's morn," says she. "The

callan 's comin' hame. It 's auld lang syne ance mair."

It had been a long day, and Bargarran was now lying in his bed while the Northern dusk was settling over the house.

"It's mirk, Mary," said Bargarran.

"Ay," says she; "but there's the new min."

She looked at him as he fell into a quiet sleep.

"Och," she whispered, as she went softly out. "Ye sleep as soft's a wee wean."

The ancient house of Bargarran was built four-square of rough granite, and stood between the moorland and Glen Garran, and commanded the river's course from Donan as far as Lannocks. These were the boundaries of the Dunross lands in the glen, but above, the moors extended as far as the marches of Dorag on the north and the marches of Shalloch on the south. That was a vast accumulation of acres. But besides these, the Garran hills and the peat land which rose on the other side of the glen belonged to every Dunross who succeeded in the lairdship. Wild and unkempt woods sheltered the old house from the sea

blasts which blew from the northeast across miles of dark moorland, and brought the salt smell and grey colour of the Northern seas. The dairies, byres, stables, and grass-lands for the poll cattle lay outside the fences of the house-grounds proper, but were visible from the eastern windows. The house was built in the most solid and simple style, and no Dunross had ever attempted any exterior decoration. As yet the huge structure betrayed no signs of decay, although the roofs were storm-stained. For the great oaks had sent their leaves generation after generation whirling upon them, so that the slates were red and brown. The house was grim like a fortress, and it was no wonder if Bargarran had shrugged his shoulders at the lighter structures in Piccadilly. The garden matched with the house. There were no trim lawns, and the flowers were not those of delicate hectic blushes. And yet, owing to the neighbouring moors, the Bargarran honey was famous for its richness. When a dawn broke through the pines, or a sunset fell red on the rhododendron and juniper bushes, and made the quartz of the

granite walls glimmer and shine, there was a sense of wonderful illumination. No verandas, no balconies, not even a bow-window adorned the house, which stood grim and solid, as if repelling rather than inviting entrance.

The interior was ornamented and finished in accordance with the same rigid model. The walls of the entrance-hall, for instance, were of rough granite, but they were covered with old muskets and fire-locks and some disused breech-loaders, together with mediæval armour corroding in the Northern dampness. A granite staircase, up which ran a narrow strip of green carpet, led to the first floor, where were the living rooms. The library, which was surrounded by open shelves containing hundreds of forgotten books, had an organ, but was otherwise sparsely furnished. The stiff, high-backed chairs were covered in grey linen, but the oak carving on the legs was visible. It was in this room that Bargarran awaited Ninian's return.

From the windows of the upper floors and from the roof was to be had a magnificent prospect of blue mountains and glens. With a

good telescope it was possible in clear weather to see herds of deer moving over the hilltops, and the antlers outlined against the sky or disappearing among rocks. The Bargarran deer-forest was known to contain the best "royals" in Scotland. It was a long climb to the moors, but pony paths made the ascent easier. From the highest hills, except on hazy days, the sea was visible, and thither often the deer went, obeying some curious instinct which caused them to bathe in salt water. They travelled back generally by night to their old haunts, sheltered from the winds which came up the glen.

It was a place of heights and great vistas, where the horizon is wider than is ever possible in a landscape overpowered by Alps. The North is dark, but when the stars shine there are nowhere such pure crystals, and when dawn is behind the mist there is no such glimmering atmospheric arras. Grouse, ptarmigan, and the infrequent woodcock and herons rising from the peat pools, together with deer and the eagles, were the lonely inhabitants of this vast upland. Many a time Bargarran had seen

an eagle swooping upon a deer calf, alighting on its shoulders and flapping his wings over its head, until the beast, dizzy and terrified, rolled down the rocks and became an easy prey.

It was not always cool on the moorland, and an August sun bristled and cracked the peat.

It was now the middle of August, and as yet not a shot had been heard on these moors. The Laird was awaiting the arrival of Ninian and Debrisay, and although he knew that he might certainly do as he pleased, yet Debrisay was actually the tenant, and the arrangements for shooting would require to be left in his hands. To the Laird's horror, however, Debrisay arrived without Ninian one night at the beginning of the third week. The boy had been suddenly invited to the Blanshards', and he had telegraphed to Debrisay that he would not be able to come North for five or six days. Debrisay, therefore, came on alone, since it was necessary to meet the Ossingtons. When the carriage drew up at the door the Laird, who was sitting in the library in excitement at

the prospect of seeing his son, told Mrs. McClintock to go to the window to see Ninian alighting; but when she saw only Debrisay she lifted her hands and exclaimed :

“Gude help us ! it’s nae the laddie ava !”

This was terrible news for Bargarran, and as soon as Debrisay entered the room the old man demanded impatiently why Ninian had not come, and it was long before Debrisay persuaded him that Ninian had decided to come at all. Bargarran shook his head in grief and excitement, and began almost to upbraid Debrisay.

“Calm yourself, Laird,” said Debrisay, who noticed that the old man had become feebler in ten days.

“My legs,” said Bargarran, “won’t carry me now. Have you told him I am — am dying?”

“No, for it’s not true,” said Debrisay, rallying him.

The old man sank into silence, while Debrisay left him and ordered Slocock, who had accompanied him, to help Dalbiac with the luggage. In showing him to his room, Mrs. McClintock said :

"It's shamefu'. He'll dee; he'll dee! Whaur's Maister Nin?"

"He's coming," said Debrisay.

Then he went back and attempted to comfort Bargarran.

"I am not master here," said the Laird as he held Debrisay's hand.

"Nonsense, Laird," replied Debrisay. "I'll go away if you talk like that. I am your guest."

"Oh no; I am yours!" said Bargarran.

But now and again he spoke in a peevish voice, and it seemed difficult for him to remember that it was owing to Debrisay's kindness that he had been brought back to his moors. Mrs. McClintock, too, although she knew the real state of affairs, received orders from Debrisay only with a bad grace. As for Dalbiac, he was nursing his own thoughts, and urged Slocock to say when young Bargarran would arrive. But Slocock only shrugged his shoulders and asked why the devil he should know.

When Debrisay informed Mrs. McClintock that she must prepare rooms for the Ossingtons,

who were to arrive next night, she looked at him in surprise.

"I ken her," she said dubiously, "and sae does the Laird."

"By the way, I forgot to mention it to him," said Debrisay.

"It's nae sic folks we're wantin' here!" exclaimed Mrs. McClintock under her breath, while Debrisay went to tell the Laird.

But when Bargarran heard that the Ossingtons were coming, he was unable to conceal his anger and suspicion. For he knew the stories about Beatrice and Debrisay, and had heard all the rumours.

"Come near," he said, and looked fixedly at Debrisay. "I suppose, sir, I dare not complain—it is your house—but I am surprised—I am. O God!—I am helpless in my own house."

"What do you mean, Laird?" asked Debrisay, sharply.

"It was my son you promised to bring, and not such—such notorious——"

"Laird!" exclaimed Debrisay, in a trembling tone, but the old man with an impatient gesture waved him off.

Next morning Debrisay walked restlessly up and down the grounds and back and forward between the house and the garden. The gamekeepers and stalkers came for orders about shooting, but he seemed to take no interest in these matters, and told them he was in no hurry to begin. He brooded the entire day, and grew impatient at its length. He ordered Mrs. McClintock to show him the rooms she had prepared for Beatrice, and when he went through them, she expressed her astonishment by saying, "Sic a like thing tae dae!"

Beatrice was to have the two rooms at the west corner of the second floor, and Ossington the rooms next.

Bargarran's helpless state and Ninian's absence had ceased to occupy Debrisay's thoughts. The fact that Beatrice would actually be in the house that night amazed and disquieted him. No doubt his first real intention in coming North had been to bring Bargarran and Ninian together, and to enjoy some grouse-shooting and deer-stalking, and, if possible, to forget Beatrice. But now everything was changed. The old man might cry

in his room, but Debrisay would remain deaf. Debrisay was almost mad by reason of the long fast of love.

Bargarran whispered to Mrs. McClintock: "There is something about that man that terrifies me, Mary! You know, you have heard how long he has loved that woman, and that even while she was a girl here long ago there was talk about their marriage. And now, why has he brought her and Ossington here? Is my house—gracious God——!"

"He was trampin' his room a' nicht!" exclaimed Mrs. McClintock. "Maun I ca' the gillies in?"

"Lock my door, Mary, lock my door," said Bargarran, trembling. "And Nin—what has he done with Nin? Why has he come here alone?— Tell Dalbiac to watch——"

Dalbiac, indeed, impatient in his humiliation, was saying to himself, "*J'enrage!*"

At last the evening came, and carriage-wheels were heard in the avenue. Mrs. McClintock, who should have been on the door-step, was, by Bargarran's orders, standing at the library window. She saw Ossington

and Beatrice descend, and then Laroche and a waiting-maid following with the luggage. Debrisay met them at the door, and extended his hand first to Beatrice. The moor wind had brought colour to her face, and she was flushed and radiant; but Ossington looked the same deadly white.

It was already dusk, and the entrance hall was lit with lamps and candles, and the armour on the walls was casting long shadows. Debrisay surprised Ossington with the news that Ninian had not yet arrived.

“And the Laird?” asked Beatrice.

“Oh, he’s here, but he’s so ill he’ll not be able to see you,” replied Debrisay.

There was something forced and unnatural in this meeting, and all three were ill at ease. Only Laroche and Dalbiac seemed pleased to see each other, and began to give mutual confidences in whispers.

There are certain images which remain permanent in the human mind, and Debrisay never forgot his sight of Beatrice dressed in a pale blue frock as she came down the long

granite staircase a few minutes before dinner was served. Her auburn hair gleamed in the candle rays, but she had a haunted look ; and it was more in the suffering and unrest of love that they looked into each other's eyes and whispered each other's names.

Dalbiac, Laroche, and Slocock served the dinner in the old dim dining-room.

"What a height the roof is !" exclaimed Beatrice.

The conversation turned on the Laird and on Ninian.

"I believe they are angry at us, George," said Beatrice, turning to her husband. "That's why the Laird won't see us and Nin won't come. *We* are the interlopers."

"Nonsense!" said Debrisay, "he's only very peevish, and as soon as Nin turns up he'll be all right again."

Ossington remained peculiarly silent, but he complained of cold.

"Sometimes it is cold, even on an August night," said Debrisay. "Remember how high we are. They kindle a fire in the hall afterwards."

Ossington seemed to take no interest in the talk until Debrisay asked when he wished to go shooting.

"I suppose we should have a day at the grouse first," he replied, "but the velvet must be off by this time."

"Oh, yes, we can go stalking whenever you like," said Debrisay. "I saw the stalker to day."

"Well, *you* should decide," said Ossington.

"Is the Laird really ill?" asked Beatrice.

"I think he is," replied Debrisay, "but Nin will probably arrive in a day or two. I expect a telegram. He often changes his mind suddenly."

"Does the Laird know we are here?" asked Ossington.

"Of course," said Debrisay, smiling.

The truth was that the Laird had been with difficulty restrained from tottering in among them and denouncing them to their faces. Mrs. McClintock helped to aggravate his anger and suspicions.

"It's shameful, Bargarran!" she said.

"Go down to the hall, Mary, and turn up

the big Bible at the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and put a great mark in red chalk opposite the Seventh Commandment," ordered Bargarran.

The huge Bible lay on an oak desk, and every night two candles with crimson shades were lit and placed beside it, according to a custom which had been handed down in the family for generations. It was out of that Bible that Bargarran had read the Scriptures morning and evening to his servants for sixty years. Mrs. McClintock, in obedience to his orders, went down and put a great mark in red chalk opposite the words "THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," and left the book lying open at that passage.

A fire was now burning in the great ingle. Beatrice left the two men to smoke their cigars in the dining-room and went into the hall. She was familiar with all the customs of Bargarran House, and was not surprised to see the big ha' Bible and the lighted candles. Curiosity took her to the open page, however, and when she saw the words marked she blushed as red as the chalk, and turned the

leaf, and sat down near the fire ; but she was too hot, and moved out of reach of the rays. Presently Ossington and Debrisay came into the hall, but Ossington went upstairs, saying he wanted to look after his rifles.

"It is too hot," said Beatrice to Debrisay.

"Let us go out, then," said Debrisay.

They were no sooner outside than she whispered to him the dreadful thing she had found.

"*He* has done it," she said. "Arthur, I ought not to have come."

"No, I know who did it. It's the Laird. Ossington has n't enough imagination for that. That's Highland! The Laird is intolerable, and the only one of his servants who does n't give me insolence is Dalbiac."

The moonlight was blazing in the vast garden and making the quartz sparkle on the granite walls; but the pine-wood through which the path to the moorland ran was dense and dark, and thither Debrisay led Beatrice.

"We cannot go; he'll be looking for us," she said.

But Debrisay seemed not to care. He took

her in his arms and kissed her in the agony and rage of love. There was no note of tenderness in his voice, but a kind of muffled despair.

"Gracious God, Beatrice! was it just?" he said, as she attempted to struggle out of his arms.

"No—no; it was not! I ask you to forgive me, Arthur—spare me! forgive me!"

"I watched the horrible *fiasco* of your marriage— What did you *mean*? I have loved no one but you—not a woman has crossed my path— No, you are mine—you are never his," he cried.

"Will we go to him? Will we tell him the truth?" she asked, sobbing. "Arthur—he may be coming behind us— Stop!—listen!"

"I abhor him—I care nothing—I hate him," said Debrisay, covering her lips with kisses.

"Darling, wait. I tell you, let me go! We must go back!" she implored.

Debrisay let her go, and they began to walk back. Ossington was waiting for them in the entrance-hall. He had been searching for them in every room.

"What have you been doing, George?" asked Beatrice, timidly. "We were looking for you — It's lovely in the garden, but it *is* getting colder."

Ossington knew that they had not been looking for him, but he attempted still to control himself.

"I have been turning the pages of this big Bible," he said, laughing. "There's an extraordinary mark as red as blood opposite the Seventh Commandment. Have you seen it?"

He looked at Beatrice, who was hardly able to disguise her excitement.

"No," said Debrisay, going forward with a pretence of gaiety, while Beatrice followed him. All three were standing before the open page where the chalk-mark was burning a fiery red opposite "THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY."

"Why," said Debrisay, "it's also opposite 'THOU SHALT NOT KILL.' So far as I know, the ancient Bargarrans broke the Sixth Commandment oftener than the Seventh. No doubt some pious member of the family wanted to remind them of their sins."

As the words "THOU SHALT NOT KILL" fell upon Ossington's ear, he started suddenly and looked at Debrisay's face, upon which the shadows of the flickering candles were falling. All the flush and radiance had left Beatrice's cheeks, and she began to move away.

"It's a weird old house," said Debrisay. "You know, there are murder stains on the granite of that staircase."

Ossington sat down beside his wife, and Debrisay sat opposite them. The firelight was playing upon the diamond in Debrisay's shirt-front, and, to Beatrice's horror, she noticed, stretched across the linen, a thread of her own auburn hair. She turned to see if Ossington was noticing it. Of course he had noticed it, and his eyes were transfixed on Debrisay's shirt-front. He rose and went forward, and said :

"Will you let me see this diamond?"

"Certainly," said Debrisay.

And while Ossington stooped down and pretended to examine the diamond he caught two threads of his wife's hair, which were clinging to the stud, and wound them round his fingers,

When he was sitting beside her again, Beatrice noticed that the hair had been removed, and she kept growing paler and paler.

"You look cold," said Ossington.

"Oh, no—no," she said.

Debrisay saw that Ossington was in a deadly mood, and began to attempt to humour and conciliate him.

"Look here," he said, "if you like, we shall go stalking to-morrow. The stalker told me that he thinks to-morrow will be a splendid day. The wind is not likely to change. We may not have such a chance for weeks."

"Just as you like," said Ossington, bending forward and betraying more interest.

"Dalbiac asked me to allow him to be my loader," continued Debrisay, speaking in a lower tone. "He 's a curious chap. He seems mad on stalking. Whom would *you* take?"

"Laroche," said Ossington, quickly. "He 's been at it before."

"All right. We'll have to start about half-past six. I'll send word to the beaters," said Debrisay.

At that moment Dalbiac came and handed a telegram to Debrisay.

"I bet you it's from Nin," said Debrisay, opening it. "Yes. 'Arrive to-morrow night.'"

"Oh, then we can't go?" asked Ossington.

"Yes. Why not? We'll be back at five. Dalbiac, we're going stalking to-morrow. Send word at once. And call Lord Ossington and me at a quarter to six."

"Yes, sir," said Dalbiac, and withdrew.

"This will please the old boy at last," said Debrisay. "You'll see him to-morrow. What a surprise for Nin!"

Beatrice thought that she had never seen such a ghastly look on her husband's face. She was fascinated, and kept turning to look at him. She could have burst into tears. The fact that he had without Debrisay's knowledge actually removed those two wisps of her hair began to fill her with terror. It meant that he was going to use his discovery as a clue against them. And all at once she imagined them on the moorland, quarrelling about her, with their rifles in their hands.

In a thick voice she said :

"I don't think you should go— It will be— be misty, perhaps—and wait for Ninian."

"Not at all," said Debrisay. "The weather will be splendid, they say. And we 'll be home in time to welcome Nin."

"Yes," said Ossington.

Beatrice felt her heart sinking within her when she heard them beginning to talk about trigger-plates and trajectories and bullets. In her utter confusion she was at a loss to know what to do.

"We had better get to bed," said Debrisay. "The old man is no doubt asleep. We had better not wake him. Will you give him this telegram to-morrow? *Then* he will agree to see you."

Beatrice took the telegram and said "Good night," and the three of them went up the long staircase with their candles.

She thanked God that she and Ossington had separate rooms, because she determined to remain awake, and as soon as all was quiet to steal along the corridor to Debrisay and warn him not to go to the moors with her husband. But Ossington was awake, too, and was

going about the long passages with a dark lantern which he had found in his room.

At a quarter to two he heard a door open, and he slipped behind a marble statue. Presently he saw Beatrice emerge with a light and go softly along the thick oak matting which covered the corridor. He shut his lantern, and when she had disappeared round the corner of the rectangle, he followed until he saw her standing at Debrisay's door. She was wrapped in a light cloak, and he noticed the candle-stick shaking in her hand. He and also she could hear The Bargarran crying in his room in the next corridor, "My God! My God!"

Apparently, however, Debrisay was asleep. Beatrice began to knock, and heard in terror the echoes of her knocking reverberating against the walls. She was ready to sink down in despair; but she continued to knock, and Ossington, hardly breathing, continued to listen, until at length Debrisay was apparently aroused, because the door was suddenly opened.

When Ossington saw Beatrice move across

the threshold he almost shrieked. In a few hurried whispers she was imploring her Arthur not to go to the moors in the morning. Ossington could not hear what they said, but he knew by instinct that his wife was in Debrisay's arms. He heard faint sobs, and as he crept nearer he heard: "Darling, darling, no, no; promise not to go. I will die if you go!"

He began to retreat, because apparently his wife was coming away. She was rather staggering than walking. She stopped as if she meant to turn back to Debrisay, but then went on again until she reached her own door.

Eight beaters left Bargarran House at half-past five; but it was not till a quarter to seven that Debrisay and Ossington mounted the ponies and took the moorland path. For Debrisay, believing that Beatrice was only suffering from her imagination, had decided to shoot with Ossington.

The stalker led the way, and Dalbiac and Laroche and two gillies came behind with the rifles and cartridges. There was an extra pony with pack-saddles for the food. The morning was misty, indeed, but the gillies

prophesied a great day's sport ; and as the party moved higher and higher, the mist began to be dispersed and the sun shone out. It was not likely that the passes towards which the deer were to be driven could be reached before eleven o'clock, so that Ossington and Debrisay prepared themselves for a long road. It was over rough ground and often through burns and across bog-land that the ponies picked their way.

Debrisay and Ossington said little to one another, and each seemed intent on his own thoughts. In short, Debrisay considered that Ossington was the most unsocial sportsman with whom he had ever gone stalking. It was Ossington's intention to shoot Debrisay while the deer were being driven towards the guns. During the entire ascent he was silent and was rehearsing everything in his mind. Last night had brought him to that point of dazzlement and stupefaction which marks the climax in a crime. Gradually he fell behind Debrisay, while Dalbiac, who was also mounted, moved up to take his place.

Ossington was now with Laroche, and kept

questioning him about the cartridges. The hills were clear of mist, so that the flag signals would be instantly visible.

The stalker advised Debrisay and Ossington to dismount, and the ponies were left behind in charge of one of the men. The stalker led the way over a rocky path, and was followed in single file by Debrisay and Dalbiac, Ossington and Laroche.

Debrisay began to use his light telescope on the opposite hill, but as yet there was no signalling.

The ~~wind~~ had not changed within the last forty-eight hours. The deer, therefore, had probably not shifted position since they had been reconnoitred the previous afternoon. At that season of the year they are generally found on the hilltops.

A half-hour's cautious walk brought the party to the passes which had been selected. Debrisay and Dalbiac halted at one point, and Ossington and Laroche, following the stalker's instructions, moved about sixty yards to the right.

The hillside opposite to the intervening

corrie was the ground that had been selected for the drive.

All were in readiness, therefore, for the signals from the beaters, who had already begun to move the herd, and some shouts were heard across the corrie.

Ossington was so placed that his point of vantage was almost in a line with Debrisay's. The rifles were being uncovered, and through his glass Ossington observed that Debrisay held his gun in his hand and was getting into position. He was able to see the pattern of Debrisay's jacket, and almost to count the hairs of his moustache.

"Give me my rifle," he said to Laroche in a somewhat thick and stifled voice.

Indeed, every one except Ossington was watching the sky-line on the opposite hill. Suddenly antlers were seen clearly outlined against the blue sky.

The herd had begun to move, and the cries of the beaters were broken by the loud "Buagh, buagh!" of the stags.

In an instant the whole herd was plunging down the hillside into the corrie to meet the

guns. That was the moment Ossington chose to fire at Debrisay. It was the moment when Debrisay had sighted his stag and was pulling the trigger.

Ossington, however, had hit, not Debrisay, but Dalbiac, who fell dead, and then headlong over the rock.

Apparently Ossington had seen his mistake, and fired again, but the gun burst in his face, its fragments were in his brain, and he fell in a pool of blood at Laroche's feet. In a few moments there was nothing but confusion.

Debrisay had ceased firing into the herd, and in consternation was signalling to Laroche, who in turn was signalling to him. The beaters were still shouting and wondering at the silence of the guns, while the deer were allowed to go thundering up the glen.

Debrisay ran down to Dalbiac, whom he found dead. He waved his handkerchief, supposing that he was waving it to Ossington, but it was Laroche who was signalling frantically back.

The stalker, who had posted himself beyond Ossington in order to fire last at the stags,

came running towards Laroche, who showed him Ossington lying in the death agony. Half his head was blown off, and before Debrisay reached the spot to find out what had happened, Ossington was dead.

It was a moment of consternation, but Debrisay began at once to question Laroche.

"He was shooting too much to the left, sir," said Laroche, in excitement; "he was impatient, I suppose, till the deer came past, and wanted to shoot before you. At the second shot the gun burst, and he fell as you see him."

Debrisay had the presence of mind to take these words down in writing, although his hand trembled as he wrote.

"Dalbiac's dead!" he said.

The beaters had arrived, and Debrisay, hardly realising what had taken place, ordered them to carry the bodies and put them on the ponies, and start at once for Bargarran House. The day's sport was over, and it had been deadly indeed.

As yet Debrisay certainly did not know that it was his own murder that had been meditated by the man who was now strapped dead

to a pony, far less that in the sudden death of Dalbiac one who was dangerous to the life of Ninian had been suddenly removed. He followed the ponies down the hillside as if he were being led through a nightmare. It was not possible for them at that pace to reach the house till six o'clock, and before they would arrive in the glen the sun would be setting red on the Bargarran moors.

Meantime, there was sufficient stir in Bargarran House because Ninian had arrived. Beatrice had passed a day of terrible foreboding. She had even forgotten to hand the telegram to Mrs. McClintock, so that Ninian's arrival was still unexpected. She had eaten nothing all day, but had been looking through a field-glass towards the moors so constantly that Mrs. McClintock said, "She's daft." It so happened, however, that she was in the entrance-hall when a carriage drove up and Ninian stepped out of it. She ran to the door.

"Oh, I forgot to tell them," she exclaimed, while Ninian looked at her with surprise.

"Arthur did not tell me you were here," he

said, as he blushed and shook hands. "Good heavens! you are looking ill."

"Maister Nin! Maister Nin!" cried Mrs. McClintock, rushing towards him and taking his hands; "I'm like to greet."

"You here, Mary!" said Ninian, supposing that she had been sent to keep the house for Debrisay.

"Come awa upstairs, Maister Nin — I hae things to say in your ain lug," says she.

Ninian, thinking there was something wrong since Mrs. McClintock's manner was strange, shouted down to Beatrice:

"I'll be back in a minute."

Mrs. McClintock took him to the library door, which she opened.

"It's your auld daddie," she said, and showed him in.

At these words Ninian drew back; but he had already caught a glimpse of Bargarran's white head and outstretched hands.

"Father — Father — dear old Father!" he cried, and ran forward and put his arms round the old man's neck.

"Nin — Nin — my Nin!" sobbed Bargarran;

“you will forgive your old father, Nin, tottering into the arms of God!——”

Twilight was falling, and yet the shooting-party had not returned.

“Och! they’ll hae gralloched a guid stag,” said Mrs. McClintock, seizing Beatrice’s hand to express her delight, “and are bringin’ him doon the brae.”

Beatrice shuddered, and kept standing at a window in the corridor, looking through a field-glass towards the moors.

Presently Ninian came out.

“Beatrice,” he said, “this *is* a surprise. Arthur is magnificent. I told you!”

“Will the Laird see me now?” asked Beatrice, attempting to enter into the boy’s delight.

“Why, of course. I’ll wheel him out here to see them coming back. They’ve gone stalking?”

“Yes,” said Beatrice, “and I’m always afraid of accidents.”

“You’ve been looking in the wrong direction,” said Ninian, taking the glass and looking

through it. "Why, here they come. They've got two stags. I see them strapped to the ponies."

He handed back the glass, but as Beatrice looked again she gave a great cry:

"There are human bodies strapped to the ponies!"

Ninian seized the glass, while Beatrice kept crying:

"Do you see — Arthur?"

Ninian turned rapidly and looked at her.

"Yes," he said, "Arthur is walking behind the ponies, but — Beatrice, come into the room here — I'll go and meet them."

It was only Bargarran who felt a single complete emotion that night. When Beatrice and Debrisay looked into each other's eyes, conscious of how violently the deadlock of their desires had been loosened, they were conscious also of a kind of guilt of destiny.

THE END.



GOOD FICTION



The House Opposite

A Mystery. By ELIZABETH KENT. 12mo, cloth, *net*, \$1.00; 16mo, paper, 50 cts.

There are few readers who will not confess to a delight in a well-constructed detective story. This tale should take rank among the first. It tells of a mysterious occurrence in a fashionable apartment house in Madison Avenue, New York, and the tracing of the causes of that occurrence through the chapters of the book forms a narrative of thrilling interest.

The Sheep-Stealers

A Romance of the West of England. By VIOLET JACOB. 12mo, *net*, \$1.20. By mail, \$1.35.

A novel with a hint of Thomas Hardy about it,—a story of Devon, and told in a manner that will surely draw wide attention to Mrs. Jacob as a new and notable contributor to real literature.

The Poet and Penelope

By L. PARRY TRUSCOTT. 12mo (By mail, \$1.10), *net*, \$1.00.

"The book is delightful from first to last. Mr. Truscott tells his story daintily and lightly; but he is not merely a writer of graceful comedy. He understands men and women. Each one of his characters is a personage in his or her way, and there is a subtlety in the drawing of the hero and the heroine that gives the story reality."—*London World*.

New York—G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS—London

GOOD FICTION

Lavender and Old Lace

By MYRTLE REED, author of "Love Letters of a Musician,"

"The Spinster Book," etc.

12°. (By mail, \$1.65) net, \$1.50

Full Crimson Morocco net, \$2.00

Miss Reed has carried her lively style and charming humor from letters and essays into the field of fiction. This is the story of a quaint corner of New England where more than one romance lies hidden underneath the prim garb of a little village.

The Earth and the Fullness Thereof

A Tale of Styria. By PETER ROSEGGER, author of "The Forest Schoolmaster," "The God Seeker," etc. Authorized English Version by FRANCES E. SKINNER.

12° \$1.50

There is, throughout, that same sweet recognition of the beautiful in life, even where human existence is the most squalid, that gave a wonderful quality to "The Forest Schoolmaster." And there is a true pleasure in the story's happy conclusion that is born of no playwright's trick, but of a sense of the eternal justice of things.

Fame for a Woman

or, Splendid Mourning. By CRANSTOUN METCALFE. With Frontispiece by ADOLF THIEDE.

12°. (By mail, \$1.35) net, \$1.20

Madame de Staël wrote: "Fame is for women only a splendid mourning for happiness"; Mr. Metcalfe tells us how a sweet little woman, whose world is little bigger than her husband, loses that perspective by contact with the superficially clever young literary set in London. She is persuaded to write, and her writing is attended with success, such as it is,—the sort of success which means much figuring in "literary notes," interviews describing the privacy of one's fireside, and pre-eminence among so-called Bohemians.

New York — G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS — London

GOOD FICTION

Morchester

A Story of American Society, Politics, and Affairs. By CHARLES DACHET. 12°. (By mail, \$1.35.) *Net*, \$1.20

"Though unknown to the readers of romance, Mr. Datchet here shows himself to be a master of the craft of romance writing. The action of his book takes place in an eastern city which may easily be identified with Pittsburgh, and in several of the characters of the story, local politicians of national reputation may be recognized. . . . The story on every page shows power, reserve, and a profound knowledge of the actualities of modern life, and no little literary handling."—*Chicago Interior*.

The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci: The Forerunner

By DMITRI MEREJKOWSKI, author of "The Death of the Gods," etc. Authorized translation from the Russian, edited by HERBERT TRENCH. 12°. (By mail, \$1.65.) *Net*, \$1.50

"Leonardo, who is presented as the hero of the story, is a figure of great nobility. . . . A finer study of the artistic temperament at its best could scarcely be found. And Leonardo is the centre of a crowd of striking figures. It is impossible to speak too highly of the dramatic power with which they are presented, both singly and in combination. . . . The story as a whole is a very powerful piece of work, standing higher above the level of contemporary fiction than it would be easy to say."—*London Spectator*.

Typhoon

By JOSEPH CONRAD, author of "Lord Jim." 16°. (By mail, \$1.10.) . . . *Net*, \$1.00

"Its scenes are painted with a vividness that leaves us breathless. . . . It is an extraordinarily artistic book. . . . Only a man of genius could have written 'Typhoon.'"—*N. Y. Tribune*.

New York—G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS—London

GOOD FICTION

Patricia of the Hills

By **CHARLES KENNETT BURROW.**

12°. (By mail, \$1.10.) *Net* \$1.00

"Patriotism without unreasonableness ; love of the open air and the free hills without exaggeration ; romance without over-gush ; humor and melancholy side by side without morbidity ; an Irish dialect stopping short of excess ; a story full of sincere feeling."—*The Nation*.

"No more charming romance of the old sod has been published in a long time."—*N. Y. World*.

"A very pretty Irish story."—*N. Y. Tribune*.

Eve Triumphant

By **PIERRE DE COULEVAIN.** Translated by **ALYS HALLARD.**

12°. (By mail, \$1.35.) *Net* \$1.20

"Clever, stimulating, interesting, . . . a brilliant mingling of salient truth, candid opinion, and witty comment."—*Chicago Record*.

"An audacious and satirical tale which embodies a great deal of clever and keen observation."—*Detroit Free Press*.

"An extremely clever work of fiction."—*Louisville Courier-Journal*.

Monsieur Martin

A Romance of the Great Swedish War. By **WYMOND CAREY.**

12°. (By mail, \$1.35.) *Net* \$1.20

"It was with genuine pleasure that we read 'M. Martin.' . . . We cordially admire it and sincerely hope that all who read this page will also read the book."—From a Column Review in the *Syracuse Herald*.

"Wymond Carey's name must be added to the list of authors whose first books have given them a notable place in the world of letters, for 'Monsieur Martin' is one of the best of recent historical romances."—*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

"Mr. Wymond Carey has given us much pleasure in reading his book, and we are glad to praise it."—*Baltimore Sun*.

New York — G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS — London

